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Nietzsche's Wagner in Bayreuth: *a study of Nietzsche's fourth* Untimely Meditation

by

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ABSTRACT

Dominating Friedrich Nietzsche's *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* is the significance of Wagner and the Bayreuth festival. Going far beyond biographical and historical matters, Nietzsche is not concerned with Wagner and the festival *per se*, but his 'young and beautified' Wagner. Understanding the significance of the festival and its untimeliness requires gaining the 'Wagnerian inner view.' Using Nietzsche as a guide, the present thesis attempts to gain this view—if not wholly, at least partially. Doing so not only reveals the importance of the Nietzschean 'Wagner in Bayreuth,' but also imparts knowledge about music and drama in general, their relationship to man, the decadence of art in modernity, and how art can and should serve life. Another important dimension of the fourth *Untimely Meditation* is how the essay relates to Nietzsche himself. Thus, the question of how the philosopher fits into the story of 'Wagner in Bayreuth' is also considered.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, thoughtful people have taken art, or music, very seriously.[1] They have marveled at the enigmatic nature of music, man's unique appetite for fantasy, his ability to craft poetry and myths, and his delight in beauty.[2] Much more than mere decoration or entertainment, art is a central aspect of every culture. Art shapes the human soul, establishes man's view of the world and himself, and powerfully influences his expectations of life. Thus, the relationship between man and art is dialectical: man makes art and art, in turn, makes man. Art traditionally has been considered of great concern to politics, as it exerts its power over both rulers and citizens; it forms man's character, defines the horizons within which he acts, provides him with moral and intellectual instruction, educates him in what is noble and good, offers him heroes and role models, reflects and reinforces his national culture, and ties men together.[3] Consequently, the quality of art is instrumental to the wellbeing of the polity.

Great political philosophers, from Plato and Aristotle to Rousseau and Nietzsche, have been particularly concerned with art, especially with music and its power to profoundly affect the human soul. Rhythm and harmony stir the passions and produce different states of mind and character. As Aristotle observes,

> in rhythms and tunes there are likenesses particularly close to the genuine natures of anger and gentleness, and further of courage

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[1] 'Music' as the ancient Greeks used the term, included everything that fell under the authority of the Muses. The Greek idea of 'music' as encompassing all the arts is close to Wagner and Nietzsche's understanding of music (as we typically use the term today).

[2] My use of the words "man" and "men" reflects Nietzsche's use of *Mensch* and *Menschen*. Thus, it is inclusive of all human beings.

[3] For an interesting and insightful discussion of this issue, see Allan Bloom's introduction to his translation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre*, xi-xxxiv.

> and moderation and of all the things opposite to these and of the other things pertaining to character. This is clear from the facts: we are altered in soul when we listen to such things.[4]

If music truly does possess such power to affect a certain quality of soul, Aristotle concludes, "clearly it must be employed and the young must be educated in it."[5] Traditionally, a musical education was considered an essential aspect of cultivating virtue:

> The man that hath no music in himself,
> Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
> Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils,
> The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
> And his affections dark as Erebus:
> Let no such man be trusted:—mark the music.[6]

The modern age, greatly influenced by the thought of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, has paid little attention to the ethical role of music in human life. Music, like art in general, tends to be regarded solely as ornamentation and entertainment, thus enjoyed for its pleasure, but largely ignored in its bearing on virtue and vice.[7] In part, our greatly diminished appreciation of the enigma and power of music results from our constant inundation with music. It is difficult, almost impossible, to escape for very long: music is everywhere. Consequently, we go through life listening to music with our ears half-closed and our minds elsewhere.

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[4] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1340a18. All references to Aristotle refer to Bekker pages.

[5] Ibid., 1340b24.

[6] William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, 5.1.83-88. All references to Shakespeare cite act, scene, line.

[7] More recently, however, there have been some signs of a growing debate on the effect of music on the human soul. Allan Bloom's bestselling book, *The Closing of the American Mind*, is perhaps the most famous example. A valuable addition to this debate is found in Carson Holloway's book, *All Shook Up: Music, Passion, and Politics*. Yet, this debate is largely limited to one genre of music, 'rock and roll,' and one segment of the population, the youth. Thus, the effect of the majority of musical forms on other sorts of listeners is neglected, and the larger significance of music as such for culture and politics is greatly underestimated, if recognised at all.

Friedrich Nietzsche shared with his philosophic predecessors a deep respect for the power of music. His thought is important for understanding our experience and conception of music today. Biographer and baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau remarks, "with Nietzsche, the world obtained a thinker for whom music became the dominant experience in life."[8] Nietzsche had a personal affiliation with music, beginning his career as a composer and poet before appearing on the world stage as a philosopher.[9] He heard in music the power not only to shape the human soul, but to give birth to an entire culture, and thereby transfigure a people's world. Nietzsche first publicly expressed his thoughts on music and culture in his book *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). In his 'first-born,' he closely associated music with tragic drama: the full title of the first edition was *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*. In this book, Nietzsche expressed a need for a type of music different from romanticism (which dominated in his day) and other music composed hitherto which he regarded as decadent. Nietzsche claims he sought the music of "the flute of Dionysus"[10]—'true' music that, as "a repetition and recast of the world," produces a copy of "the primal unity, its pain and contradiction."[11] Given the crisis of Socratic rationalism (which had dominated the way of thought in Western civilization for over two thousand years), Nietzsche endeavored to reawaken the ancient god, Dionysus, and stimulate the sub-rational elements of the soul, thus "tap[ping] again the irrational sources of vitality" and strengthening the exhausted modern soul.[12] Nietzsche's philosophic inquiry of art did not stop with his first book; he continued to grapple with the problem of music throughout his life.

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[8] Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, *Wagner and Nietzsche*, 1.

[9] One might note something similar in the case of Rousseau. Like Nietzsche, Rousseau composed music, as well as theorised about it. These two musical philosophers, critics of rationalism and the Enlightenment, brought music back as a foremost concern of philosophy.

[10] Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, 1. In subsequent references, *The Case of Wagner* will be abbreviated *CW*. All references to Nietzsche refer to aphorism or section number of the text.

[11] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 5. In his later 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism' prefacing the republication of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1886), Nietzsche distinguishes Dionysian music from German music. He criticises the latter as:

> romantic through and through and most un-Greek of all possible art forms—moreover, a first-rate poison for the nerves, doubly dangerous among a people who love drink and who honor lack of clarity as a virtue, for it has the double quality of a narcotic that both intoxicates and spread a *fog* (6).

In subsequent references, *The Birth of Tragedy* will be abbreviated *BT*.

All of Nietzsche's writings on art and music are overshadowed by 'the problem of Wagner.' Richard Wagner, a master opera composer and librettist, was the dominant musical influence in the final decades of nineteenth century Germany. Nietzsche specifically treats 'the phenomenon of Wagner' in four texts: *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (1876), *The Case of Wagner* (1888), and *Nietzsche contra Wagner* (1889).[13] To understand Nietzsche's comprehensive teaching on art, culture, and modernity, one must grasp Nietzsche's ultimate view of Wagner. That Wagner is a subject of so many of Nietzsche' philosophic writings, and is referred to in most (if not all) of his other texts, does prove a complication to comprehending Nietzsche's entire teaching, as does the fact that Nietzsche's view of Wagner underwent a profound change. Nevertheless, much can be learned about Nietzsche's view of music and art in general from the study of any one of Nietzsche's texts.

Wagner in Bayreuth, Nietzsche's fifth published work and last *Untimely Meditation*, deals particularly with music and drama, and their place in human life, focusing on the modern context. Ostensibly, the subject of *Wagner in Bayreuth* is the controversial composer and the festival held in the provincial Bavarian town of Bayreuth for the performance of Wagner's opera *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*).[14] Nietzsche's discussion, however, goes far beyond biographical and historical matters. In discussing Wagner and the opera festival, Nietzsche raises significant philosophic questions regarding the nature of music and drama, and their relationship to mankind. His richly layered discussion tackles several large and abiding issues, not all of which are limited to art: the basic character of human existence; the relationship of art to life; the degradation of art in modernity; the relationship of art to philosophy; the nature of the artist; the significance of music; uses of history and philosophy; the origin of language; the creation of a folk; true education and genuine culture; and the effects of modern science on society. As is readily seen, the questions surrounding music and drama are neither minor nor peripheral. Answers to such questions point to the complex problem of human nature, revealing the kinds of beings we are and the modes of our existence.

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[12] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 73.

[13] As Bryan Magee notes in *The Tristan Chord: Wagner and Philosophy*, Wagner is present in *all* of Nietzsche's books, even when the composer is not explicitly named:

> in *Human, All Too Human* he is 'the artist', in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* he is 'the Sorcerer'. In other books whole sections are openly devoted him—for example, 'Wagner is altogether the foremost name in *Ecce Homo*' (Nietzsche in a letter dated 31 December 1888). Two books are specifically about him. Another is titled punningly after one of his operas [*Twilight of the Idols*]. Another consists largely of his ideas [*The Birth of Tragedy*]. (61)

This thesis is an interpretive analysis of *Wagner in Bayreuth*. Serving to expound the ideas that Nietzsche put forth in his essay, the present thesis is an attempt to understand Nietzsche as he understood himself—a difficult task in and of itself. Nietzsche's fourth 'untimely one' can be divided justifiably into two parts, demonstrated in the rhetorical structure of his essay; due to practicalities, this thesis focuses on the first part, which includes sections 1 through 8. Originally, Nietzsche's essay was comprised of these initial eight sections, which are dominated by his story of the significance of Wagner in Bayreuth. This story is completed within the first part of the text; rhetorically, the close of section 8 serves as a conclusion of the primary story Nietzsche is recounting. Having completed his initial draft, Nietzsche distanced himself from his text. Returning to it many months later, he wrote sections 9 through 11.[15] The beginning of section 9 reads as a new beginning and sections 9 through 11 show themselves to be distinct. Included in the second part of Nietzsche's essay are supplementary discussions, incorporating and building on issues raised in the earlier portion of the text, yet the subjects discussed reach far beyond Wagner in Bayreuth. Nietzsche's tone is also distinct: rather than emphasise the present-day significance of Bayreuth, he looks to the future, seemingly reconciled to the fact that the festival at Bayreuth is not for his day.

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[14] The *Ring* is made up of four parts: *Das Rheingold* (*The Rheingold*); *Die Walküre* (*The Valkyrie*); *Siegfried*; and *Götterdämmerung* (*The Twilight of the Gods*). It is meant to be performed with a preliminary evening followed by three days, with one opera performed each day (requiring a total of four days to perform).

The present study of *Wagner in Bayreuth* is guided by questions raised through consideration of the title Nietzsche bestowed upon his essay. The title of the fourth 'untimely one' is composed of two parts: the first is Richard Wagner, the second is Bayreuth. As in the case of the third *Untimely Meditation* (where Nietzsche does not write about Schopenhauer and his philosophy in general, but only of Schopenhauer *as educator*), Nietzsche does not write about Wagner and his art in general, but of Wagner *in Bayreuth*. Thus, from the outset, the reader is confronted with several questions: what is significant about the festival at Bayreuth? Why not just 'Wagner,' or 'Wagner, the composer and the dramatist' (paralleling the title of the first *Untimely Meditation*)?

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[15] Nietzsche completed the first eight sections of the fourth *Untimely Meditation* in October, 1875. Reluctant to publish, he did not send a manuscript to the publisher until early June, 1876. Sections 9 through 11 were not written until after this initial submission. On 25 June 1876, after having finalised his contract, Nietzsche informed his publisher of the increased length of the essay. William H. Schaberg, *The Nietzsche Canon: A Publication History and Bibliography*, 47-48.

Moreover, given that Nietzsche christens *Wagner in Bayreuth* an 'untimely one,' the reader is invited to consider the untimeliness of 'Wagner in Bayreuth.' Understanding the significance of the festival and its untimeliness requires setting it in context, and then understanding that context. This is done, Nietzsche argues, by gaining the "Wagnerian inner view" of the event at Bayreuth (1/5). Using Nietzsche as a guide, the present thesis attempts to gain this view—if not wholly, at least partially. Doing so not only reveals the importance of 'Wagner in Bayreuth,' but also imparts knowledge about music and drama in general, their relationship to man, the decadence of art in modernity, and (to borrow a phrase from Nietzsche) how art can and should serve life.[16] Bayreuth, however, is not the sole story of Nietzsche's essay; there are many other dimensions. An important one is how the essay relates to Nietzsche himself. Thus, the question of how the philosopher fits into the story of 'Wagner in Bayreuth' is also considered.

It may seem strange to look for answers to such perennially important questions in a text written by a late nineteenth century German philosopher, which deals with a composer from that same era, who was as famous for his operas as he was infamous for his chequered personal life and dubious politics. Although Nietzsche assesses the Germany of his time, his critique is applicable to the rest of Western civilisation, and remains equally relevant to the twenty-first century. In this 'untimely essay,' Nietzsche compels the modern reader to reconsider radically both art and himself. From a perspective that transcends our decadent cave, Nietzsche shrewdly diagnoses the ills of modernity and points to an art that can shape a true culture. If anything, the spiritual, cultural, and intellectual condition of the West has further declined since Nietzsche's death in 1900. The problems Nietzsche identifies have only intensified, making his diagnosis all the more relevant and his prescriptive cure all the more urgent today. If we wish to know ourselves—what we are and what we might be—we must include Nietzsche's analysis in our contemplations.

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[16] In the 'Forward' to his second 'untimely one,' *The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, Nietzsche writes:

> We need history, certainly, but we need it for reasons different from those for which the idler in the garden of knowledge needs it, even though he may look nobly down on our rough and charmless needs and requirements. We need it, that is to say, for the sake of life and action, not so as to turn comfortably away from life and action, let alone for the purpose of extenuating the self-seeking life and the base and cowardly action. We want to serve history only to the extent that history serves life....

In subsequent references, *The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* will be abbreviated *UD*.

INTERPRETING THE TEXT

Wagner in Bayreuth stands on its own as a self-contained philosophical text that can, and must, be understood first on its own terms. That said, Nietzsche's discussion deals with a subject contemporary to his time and refers to many issues and particularities of his day. Nietzsche could assume that the readers of his day were familiar with the historical and biographical material that is inseparable from his discussion. Thus, for the reader less familiar with the background of this text, a brief discussion of the Nietzsche-Wagner relationship and the first festival at Bayreuth is a necessary prerequisite to understanding the text in question. Such a discussion, however, risks that one will be tempted to try to explain away Nietzsche's thoughts as the result of, and thus limited to, his time. Considering this, one would do well to keep the following warning in mind:

> setting the philosopher in context does not entail the supposition that thought is a product of its context in some mechanical way as Hegel or Marx or Freud argued; contextualizing in Nietzsche's

> sense is not enslaved to some reductionism that explains thoughts as a reflex of non-thought.[17]

The historical nature of Nietzsche's discussion does not preclude the possibility that Nietzsche simultaneously addresses generalities and permanent truths of human life.

i. Wagner and the *Bayreuther Festspiele*

In the early nineteenth century, the capital of European art and culture was Paris, which was also the center of the opera world. In the French capital grand opera was born through the efforts of Daniel François Esprit Auber, Gioacchino Rossini, Giacomo Meyerbeer, and Jacques Halévy, quickly growing to dominate Italian and German models of opera. While impressive, grand opera typically was not seen as a serious dramatic art form. The emphasis was placed on "music and spectacle," rather than drama:[18]

> the protagonists of grand opera were usually costumed figures performing vocal stunts before a background of stupendous scenic paraphernalia. The true ambitions of such a work usually did not rise above the decorative. But, unlike the opulent art of baroque opera, which had answered the glittering but tasteful needs of an aristocratic society, grand opera was, rather, a pretentious charade or variety show responding to the ambitions of a wealthy but culturally impoverished bourgeoisie.[19]

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[17] Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*, 4.

[18] In *Aspects of Wagner*, Magee contrasts grand opera to Wagnerian opera in this regard. Wagner:

> talked of putting music at the service of drama, of music being the means and drama the end. It is the opposite of opera as an excuse for music and spectacle—the traditional opera that, even if dramatically continuous, was always musically discontinuous, a series of self-contained 'numbers' of entirely unsymphonic character in which the orchestra was used chiefly as 'accompaniment.' (11-12)

[19] Robert W. Gutman, *Richard Wagner: The Man, His Mind and His Music*, 68.

The mature Wagner was critical of grand opera, disparagingly calling the likes of Meyerbeer, Auber, and Halévy 'manufacturers of opera.' As Magee explains, Wagner "thought operas composed in their way were not works of art but consumer products manufactured to meet a demand."[20] Wagner critiqued his first three operas (*Die Feen*, or *The Fairies*, composed 1833; *Das Liebesverbot*, or *The Ban on Love*, 1835-36; and *Rienzi*, 1838-40) on the same grounds.[21] With his fourth opera, *Der Fliegende Holländer* (*The Flying Dutchman*, 1841), some argue that Wagner freed himself from conscious attempts to create operas that would succeed with the audience: "he let his intuitions take over the reins from his conscience mind, and followed them wherever they might lead him, even when he did not fully understand what he was writing."[22] With *Der Fliegende Holländer*, Wagner also abandoned the Italian and Parisian models of opera that he heretofore had employed (now considering them to be decadent forms). Instead, he embraced German romantic opera, going on to create *Tannhäuser* (1843-44) and *Lohengrin* (1846-48) in this genre. After these two operas, having "developed to its limits…German romantic opera as he found it," Wagner felt the need for a new genre, with new possibilities.[23] Thus, he worked out new theories of music and opera, inventing a "quite different form of music drama."[24] Wagner's major work, the *Ring*, was largely composed according to this new form. Beginning work on the first section of the *Ring* in 1851, the final section was not finished until 1874. During this time, he also composed *Tristan und Isolde* (*Tristan and Isolde*, 1857-59) and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (*The Master Singers of Nuremberg*, 1862-67), his only comic opera. The story of *Parsifal*, his last opera, was conceived during this timeframe; however, it was not composed until after the festival of Bayreuth, in the final years of his life (1877-82).

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[20] Magee, *The Tristan Chord*, 20.

[21] Gutman argues:

> Wagner's unquenchable drive for success made him adopt the aesthetic and methods of grand opera which his genius was to transform into art. Not only *Rienzi*, but also *Tannhäuser, Lohengrin, Meistersinger, The Twilight of the Gods*, and *Parsifal* reveal their mixed heritage strains that descend, as does Verdi's *Aida*, from Meyerbeer's Parisian grand opera. (69)

[22] Magee, *The Tristan Chord*, 20. Further expanding on Wagner's mature process of opera creation, Magee explains:

> Whether Wagner was following his creative intuitions or putting operas together at the level of his conscious mind, in both cases he regarded the process of opera-creation as an integrated one in which music, drama and verse proceeded together. In both cases, the process was musical first and last, the starting point became the generalized apprehension of a sound-world (consciously appropriated from without for the first three operas, allowed to emerge from within for the rest) the last task of all being the putting down on paper of the actual notes ('the detailed musical treatment'), with all the other parts of the process falling in between. (21)

For example,

> Months after beginning work on *Tristan and Isolde* he wrote to a friend that it was '*only music* as yet.' This means—and he said so—that when he wrote a libretto he knew already what the music for it was, not note for word but the *sort* of music it was, the sound-world it inhabited; and this became more and more particularized as the libretto developed under his hand. (16)

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[23] Magee, *The Tristan Chord*, 17. Wagner's objections to grand opera, however, did not prevent him from producing *Tannhäuser* (1845) at the Paris Opéra House. A long time was spent in production and preparations were plagued with difficulties. Wagner rewrote and altered scenes, had a new ballet choreographed, and held over one hundred and sixty rehearsals. Wagner's demands on the performers proved too much: the orchestra broke into rebellion and none of the Opéra's ballerinas would agree to appear in the first act. Parisian tradition placed dancing in the second act in order that the members of the Jockey Club—habitually detained by dinner and cognac—could watch their mistresses perform. Wagner, however, refused to acquiesce to this tradition, arguing that there was no dramatic reason for a ballet in the second act of *Tannhäuser*. One tradition that Wagner could not get around, however, was the decree that no composer could conduct his own premier. Thus,

> [a] slow, painful music demise of the Paris *Tannhäuser* seemed inevitable during the final rehearsals when the baton passed from Wagner into the hands of Pierre Dietsch, an incompetent routineer; tempi wavered, nuance vanished.

While a number of factors weighed against the three premier performances, external forces ensured their failure. The Jockey Club, who resented Wagner for disrespecting tradition regarding the ballet, broke out into open protest:

> Armed with hunting whistles and flageolets, which they blew on command, the Jockeys turned the carefully prepared presentations to shambles. Whistling, hissing, shouts, and laughter filled the great hall. When others protested, fights broke out. Many times the stage action was forced to halt as the artists helplessly awaited quiet…Wagner did not attend the third *Tannhäuser*.

Gutman, 195-99. Despite its failure with the Parisian concert crowd, *Tannhäuser* was admired for its artistic merit by a few. For example, Charles Gounod is said to have remarked: "If wish God would grant it to me to write a flop like that!" Magee, *Aspects of Wagner*, 51.

[24] Ibid., 17.

In creating a new form of opera, Wagner was not a reformist, but a revolutionary: he sought a kind of theatre altogether different from that of the modern age. Wagner found a model for the style and aesthetic of this new theatre in ancient Greece, which he viewed as the height of human artistic achievement. Through its combination of all the arts, Greek tragedy was able to attain greater scope and depth than any of the arts individually. As such, Wagner considered tragedy to be the highest art.[25] While some criticise Wagner for romanticising the Greeks, like Nietzsche, he did not seek a return to the past (which Wagner called "slavish restoration").[26] To the contrary, Wagner saw the need to revolutionise the theatre and create an 'art-work of the future'—even to improve upon and 'go beyond' the Greeks. William Shakespeare and Ludwig van Beethoven had opened new domains of art, which Wagner sought to combine. He envisioned the combination of the great poetic drama of Shakespeare with the powerfully expressive music of Beethoven, thereby creating a new form of opera: a truly musical drama.[27] By using music to express the inner feelings and motivations of the characters, Wagner could express man's inner world on stage: his opera "would explore and articulate the ultimate reality of experience, what goes on in the heart and soul."[28] Through this process, Wagner revolutionised theatre and music, the effects of which reverberated through all the arts. Wagner contributed greatly to modern music, theatre, literature, and even painting.

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[25] Cf. Magee, *Aspects of Wagner*, 5-7.

[26] For Wagner's view of the necessity of revolution (as opposed to a return to the Greeks) as he personally expressed it, see Wagner, *Art and Revolution* (1849).

[27] For a brief discussion of this relationship between drama and music, see Magee, *The Tristan Chord*, 89.

[28] Magee, *Aspects of Wagner*, 9.

Wagner was not only concerned about the style of his art, but also how his art would be treated by society. His observations of the role of theatre in modern society enraged him. In *A Communication to My Friends* (1851) he scolded,

> Our theatrical institutions have, in general, no end in view other than to cater for a nightly entertainment, never energetically demanded, but forced down people's throats by the spirit of speculation, and lazily swallowed by the social ennui of the dwellers in our larger cities.[29]

Wagner saw the need to revolutionise the very relationship between art and society—the very *reason d'être* of music and theatre. Again, he looked to the Greeks for a model. He explains in *Music of the Future* (1860),

> history supplied me with a typical model for that ideal relation, dreamed by me, of theatre and public. I found it in the theatre of ancient Athens, where its walls were thrown open on none but special, sacred feast days, where the taste of art was coupled with the celebration of a religious rite in which the most illustrious members of the state themselves took part as poets and performers, to appear like priests before the assembled populace of field and city; a populace filled with such high awaitings from the sublimeness of the artwork to be set before it, that a Sophocles, and Aeschylus could set before the folk the deepest-meaning of all poems, assured of their understanding. With the Greeks the perfect work of art, the drama, was the abstract and epitome of all that was expressible in the Grecian nature. It was the nation itself—in intimate connection with its own history—that stood mirrored in its artwork, that communed with itself and, within the span of a few hours, feasted its eyes with its own noblest essence.[30]

Wagner's life work was not only the creation of opera, but an attempt to create a theatre, based on the model of the Greeks, that would form the foundation of the culture of the new German Reich. He outlines his revolutionary project in *The Artwork of the Future* (1849):

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[29] In Wagner, *Wagner on Music and Drama*, edited by Albert Goldman and Evert Sprinchorn, 41.

[30] Ibid., 62-63.

> to take an institute whose public function was almost exclusively directed to the distraction and amusement of people bored to death by pleasure—and further, to earning money to cover the cost of exhibitions reckoned for that end—and employ it for a diametrically opposite object, namely, the snatching of a populace from out [of] its vulgar interests of everyday, to attune it to a reverent reception of the highest and sincerest things the human mind can grasp.[31]

Wagner's dream of creating such an institution led him to the idea of founding a festival for the production of his art. He envisioned that his theatre—existing outside of the established institutions—would battle against the other arts of modernity and the false values of society. This theatre would be the foundation of a new German culture.

Throughout most of Wagner's artistic life, however, he was neither widely appreciated nor respected. He first made himself known in Germany with *Rienzi*; with *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan und Isolde*, and *Die Meistersinger*, Wagner's reputation grew both nationally and internationally. In the years leading up to the Bayreuth festival and the publication of Nietzsche's fourth *Untimely Meditation*, Wagner's operas became increasingly popular; Wagnerian societies sprung up across Germany, and his operas were frequently performed. His success was not limited to the borders of his native country; his fame spread through Europe, and even across the Atlantic to America. However, his operas were rarely performed as he envisioned them.

In the spring of 1864, King Ludwig II of Bavaria, a Wagner enthusiast, contacted the composer. Wagner, at risk of imprisonment due to debt and on the run from creditors, was informed by a messenger,

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[31] Ibid., 62.

> It was the King's desire that Wagner proceed to Munich, where, under royal protection, he was to live free from material care and bring his artistic mission to completion.[32]

Wagner gladly accepted the King's proposal. His creditors appeased and luxurious living arrangements made (all at the expense of the royal coffers), Wagner's immediate task was to finish the *Ring*, which the King was eager to see performed. Plans began to develop for the construction of a theatre solely for the production of Wagner's operas. The structure was to include,

> new stage machinery and lighting devices, acoustic considerations, and, mainly, the method of construction a hollow under the stage that would serve to envelop the instrumentalists without at the same time impairing their tonal quality.[33]

More than technical innovations, however, Wagner required a very different style of theatre house. Radically departing from the traditional Baroque style, he demanded a theatre based on "ancient ideas to underscore the ritualistic impact."[34] More than a mere building, Nietzsche argued, this new theatre house would be a "laboratory for the groping and courageous spirit of German art."[35]

At the same time, Wagner began to prepare for performances in his new theatre. Not only did he focus on the training of the musicians and singers, but he outlined a plan to prepare the public and groom their taste for his new art. Wagner was seeking more than a home for his art. He dreamt of a nationalist theatre for the German folk, the cornerstone of which would be his operas. Thus, musicians, singers, and the public would have to be reeducated, while his enemies would have to be overcome:

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[32] Gutman, 229.

[33] Ibid., 238. With respect to the architecture, technology and house rules, in some respects, Wagner was so successful in reconstructing the theatre that we take his reforms for granted—forgetting that things ever were otherwise. A few such things that originated with Wagner include: the sunken orchestra pit; darkened auditoriums; lighting techniques; stage and set design; and even the rules that make latecomers wait outside and control applause, reserving it for the end of an act. Magee, *Aspects of Wagner*, 55-56.

[34] Fischer-Dieskau, 85.

[35] Nietzsche, 'Appeal to the German Nation,' in *The Nietzsche-Wagner Correspondence*, edited by Förster-Nietzsche, 191. This was written to support the Bayreuth fundraising drive; however, it was rejected by the Wagnerian Society and not distributed.

> the composer began to organize his ideas about a special conservatory to train singers, instrumentalists, and conductors in his style. Public taste would be guided both by a weekly journal of Wagnerian polemics, issued by the school's faculty, and by an allied newspaper elucidating the concept of civic rejuvenation through the Wagnerian drama. He took for granted that his artistic enterprises in Bavaria were to be part of the nation's political life. Thus, channels of communication free from the anti-Wagnerian attitudes so often found in a metropolitan press were to link the artist, his academy, and the layman.[36]

New theatres, musicians and singers trained in the Wagnerian method, and a reeducated public were necessary, as Wagner's opera was radically different from the standard operas of his day, both in content and style. Singers found his scores difficult, conductors were unused to the passion and rhythm of the music, and the whole did not provide the sort of entertainment with which the public was accustomed. For these reasons, Wagner's operas were often tampered with, bringing them down to the level of the singers and subjected to the rules of ordinary opera production. This was not always done out of malice, but more often out of ignorance or inability. In *Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche explains that in order for Wagner to bring his work into fulfillment and found a new stylistic tradition, it was necessary that Wagner produce the *Ring* at Bayreuth, thus providing an example to the world: a "mute score" was not enough (8/6).[37]

The future looked promising—Wagner had a rich, powerful patron devoted to his art, and Wagner was gaining the power he needed to realise his art. However, Wagner's own antics ended this ideal arrangement: he made considerable demands on the royal treasury, which he flaunted to an increasingly-incensed public; his own indiscretions raised speculation regarding the nature of his relationship with his royal patron (it was well-known that King Ludwig had no interest in women); and he brought Cosima von Bülow, followed by her husband Hans and their children, to live with him as his mistress in Munich. The Munich public found all of these transgressions—but especially the last—unforgivable, eventually driving Wagner out of the city. Cosima soon followed Wagner to Switzerland, where they established a household near Lucerne. King Ludwig was nevertheless determined to see the *Ring* performed in Munich. Having possession of *Die Rhinegold* and *Die Walküre* (payment for supporting Wagner), he had the first and second sections of the *Ring* performed without the composer's supervision. Wagner was furious. Try as he did, however, there was nothing he could do from Switzerland: the doors to Munich were shut to him.

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[36] Ibid., 237.

[37] All references to *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* are identified by section number, followed by the paragraph number of that section. For example, this quote (8/6) is from the sixth paragraph of section 8. Where there is more than one quote in a paragraph from the same section and paragraph of Nietzsche's essay, the reference is at the end of the paragraph.

History has handed down a different account of the situation surrounding Wagner's conception of his idea for the Bayreuth festival than that Nietzsche provides in his fourth *Untimely Meditation*. According to Gutman,

> Ludwig's contemplated production of *Valkyrie* and Wagner's first vision of the Bayreuth festival coincided. In a sense, Cosima's adultery called the latter great project into being.[38]

This was not, however, the first time that Wagner had envisioned a special production of his tetralogy:

> since the days of his correspondence with Uhlig some twenty years before, he had dreamed of the very special nature of the *Ring's* presentation…His scheme was akin to that outlined in 1863 in the preface to the first public printing of the *Ring* poem.

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[38] Gutman, 305.

> He dreamed of creating a new centre for his drama, what he was to describe as 'a kind of Washington of art.'[39]

If events in Munich did not lead Wagner to the idea of founding his own independent festival, they at least served as a catalyst to Wagner's realization of this idea. Wagner was determined that the remaining two sections of the *Ring* would only premier under his direct supervision. Thus, he blocked Ludwig from producing *Siegfried* (the third section of the *Ring*), claiming that he had not finished the score, and began working to make his vision a reality. Upon a number of recommendations—including that it fell within the confines of Bavaria and thus under the jurisdiction of Ludwig, and, lacking thermal springs, it was not frequented by frivolous summer travelers—the small provincial town of Bayreuth was the chosen location.[40]

Preparations for the festival were plagued by problems, especially monetary. Independent financing had to be raised for the building of the theatre house:

> At the suggestion of Emil Heckel, a Mannheim music dealer, plans were under way for the founding of Wagner clubs in all towns and cities where enthusiasts could be mustered. The festival was exalted as the Reich's noblest cultural undertaking, in which individuals and societies were invited to participate through the purchase of certificates of patronage.[41]

Despite everyone's efforts, however, Wagner was unable to raise sufficient funds for the festival. In the end, the festival was only made possible by the intercession of Ludwig, who put aside personal disputes for the sake of seeing Wagner's artistic mission complete. On the morning of May 22, 1872 (Wagner's fifty-ninth birthday), the cornerstone of the theatre house was laid amidst pouring rain:

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[39] Ibid., 306.

[40] Ibid., 306-7.

[41] Ibid., 324. The certificates were sold for 900 marks each. Nietzsche became a Patron in 1872. Förster-Nietzsche, *The Young Nietzsche*, 294.

> If Wagner's face was pale and tears made his voice tremble, this was no pose. 'Be blessed, my stone. Stand long and keep solid!' he tried to call out during the first three blows of the hammer.[42]

Nietzsche claims he and a few friends shared these sentiments with Wagner: they had shared Wagner's original vision for "a theatre that would be truly subversive of the false values of existing society…and Bayreuth as the missionary centre, with an elect and élite band of initiates"[43] and "*believed* that this stone placed the seal upon [their] dearest hopes."[44] However, despite Nietzsche's hopeful anticipation expressed in the fourth *Untimely Meditation*, he recognised that in reality the original aim of the festival had become overshadowed by national politics and Wagner's thirst for success; Nietzsche saw Bayreuth growing into the cultural centre of the new German Reich and pandering to the new class of German nobility. Those few friends who had shared Wagner's vision drifted away; at the cornerstone ceremony Wagner was surrounded by a band of newborn Wagnerians dedicated to the new regime,[45]

> Bayreuth was becoming a 'cultural' center of the new empire which Nietzsche had so bitterly denounced in his first *Meditation*

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[42] Fischer-Dieskau, 88.

[43] Magee, *The Tristan Chord*, 311.

[44] Nietzsche, 'Appeal to the German Nation,' 192.

[45] Notably absent were Hans von Bülow (despite the affair of his wife Cosima and Wagner, von Bülow remained loyal to Wagner out of great admiration for his music; at the same time, Wagner depended on von Bülow's skill at both conducting Wagner's operas and transcribing them for piano), Franz Liszt (friend and colleague of Wagner), and King Ludwig, amongst others. Fischer-Dieskau, 85-88; Gutman, 325-26. Years later, Nietzsche did not mince his words when discussing the Wagnerians. For example, in 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'Human, All Too Human,'' *Ecce Homo*, he writes:

> I think I know the Wagnerians; I have experienced three generations, beginning with the late Brendel who confounded Wagner and Hegel, down to the 'idealists' of the *Bayreuther Blätter* who confound Wagner and themselves—I have heard every kind of confession of 'beautiful souls' about Wagner. A kingdom for one sensible word!—In truth, a hair-raising company! Nohl, Pohl, *Kohl—droll* with charm, *in infinitum*! Not a single abortion is missing among them, not even the anti-Semite.—Poor Wagner! Where had he landed!—If he had at least entered into swine! But to descend among Germans! (2)

In subsequent references, *Ecce Homo* will be abbreviated *EH*.

> for its predominant 'cultural philistinism.' Wagner's Bayreuth was developing into a symbol of the 'extirpation of the German spirit in favor of the 'German *Reich*:'' the Holy City of anti-Semitic 'Christian' chauvinism.[46]

Before the first chords of *Rhinegold* resounded in Bayreuth, Nietzsche had already formed severe misgivings about Wagner and the festival. Nevertheless, he remained loyal to the 'idea of Bayreuth' and publicly supported it—the festival, despite its imperfections, had to be realised.

The fourth *Untimely Meditation*, published one month before the festival was held, is expressly supportive of Wagner, putting forth a strong argument for the importance of his art for modern men. Considering the festival with an objective eye, one cannot deny that it was a momentous achievement. Men contemporary to Wagner watched the events unfolding in Bayreuth closely. Never before had an artist independently built his own venue for the production of his art. Of Wagner's accomplishment, Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky remarked:

> 'What pride, what overflowing emotions must have welled up at this moment in the heart of that little man who, by his powerful determination and great talent, has defied all obstacles to the final realization of his artistic ideals and his audacious beliefs!'[47]

After the festival was held, however, Nietzsche admitted his disappointment; his experience of the festival was in stark contrast to his expectations. In *Ecce Homo*, reflecting back on the festival, he testifies he felt,

> a profound alienation from everything that surrounded me…Whoever has any notion of the visions I had encountered even before that, may guess how I felt when one day I woke up in Bayreuth. As if I were dreaming! Wherever was I? There was

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[46] Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 38. Kaufmann refers to Nietzsche, *David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer*, 1. In subsequent references, *David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer* will be abbreviated *DS*.

[47] Quoted in Gutman, 347.

> nothing I recognized; I scarcely recognized Wagner. In vain did I leaf through my memories. Tribschen—a distant isle of the blessed: not a trace of any similarity. The incomparable days when the foundation stone was laid, the small group of people that had belonged, had celebrated, and did not need first to acquire fingers for delicate matters—not a trace of any similarity. *What had happened?*[48]

What, then, are we to make of the disparity between the reality of the Bayreuth festival and the hopes Nietzsche expresses at the outset *Wagner in Bayreuth*?

One might conclude that the optimism Nietzsche's expresses in this essay results from the naivety of a young devotee of Wagner. As was Nietzsche's analysis of Wagner in *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Wagner in Bayreuth* is at risk of being treated as the mere scribblings of an enamoured Wagnerian, hence its philosophic significance overlooked.[49] However, that Nietzsche believed in the events at Bayreuth and their significance is not to be dismissed lightly as a consequence of Nietzsche's youthful admiration of Wagner. In fact, even after Nietzsche's disappointment in the first festival and his break with Wagner, he still believed in the idea of the festival and defended it from public attacks. For example, in a letter published in *Kunstwart* magazine in late 1888, he insisted that for the past ten years he had been "leading a war against the corruption of Bayreuth."[50] Nietzsche did not assume that everyone would share his view of the festival at Bayreuth—he certainly did not believe that everyone would understand its greatness as he did. For such an understanding, he argues in *Wagner in Bayreuth*, one needs "*mighty insight*" (1/4) and must gain the "Wagnerian inner view" (1/5). Only in looking at the Bayreuth festival through Nietzsche's eyes will one attain this insight and be able to see the festival as he did, thus understanding its potential significance. As revealed in Nietzsche's essay, the significance of the idea symbolised by the Bayreuth festival reaches far beyond both the historical Wagner and festival: the idea of Bayreuth is important for what it illustrates with respect to modern art and culture, and as a pointer to a higher, more genuine culture.

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[48] Nietzsche, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'Human, All-too-Human,'' *EH*, 2.

[49] Nietzsche's treatment of Wagner in *The Birth of Tragedy* earned him the approval of the Wagnerians and the spite of academics. However, neither side recognised what was truly at issue. As Fischer-Dieskau explains,

> Nietzsche had chiefly wanted to win over Classicists and historians to his view of the Greeks. But they dryly declined. Instead, Wagner's followers swarmed to the work, mistaking the side issue for the main issue and ignoring the basic difference between Nietzsche's and Wagner's attitudes on art. (75)

[50] Quoted in Schaberg, 165.

ii. Nietzsche and Wagner: a musical friendship

The relationship between Friedrich Nietzsche and Richard Wagner is one of history's famous friendships. Nietzsche, first introduced to Wagner's music as a teenager, was profoundly affected. Near the end of his life, looking back on this event, Nietzsche remarks: "From the moment when there was a piano score of *Tristan*—my compliments, Herr von Bülow—I was a Wagnerian."[51] Eight years later, Nietzsche, a newly appointed professor of philology at Basel University, became personally acquainted with Wagner.[52] Despite the disparity in their ages (Nietzsche in his twenties, Wagner in his fifties—the same age as Nietzsche's deceased father), they began an intimate, albeit brief friendship.

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[51] Nietzsche, 'Why I Am So Clever,' *EH*, 6.

[52] As a student, Nietzsche met Wagner for the first time in Leipzig. He came away from their brief meeting with nothing but praise and enthusiasm for the composer. Nietzsche's personal account of this meeting is found in his letter to Rohde (Leipzig, November 9, 1868), reproduced in Nietzsche, *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, edited by Christopher Middleton. The close association between the two men, however, did not begin until they met again at Triebschen (Wagner's home near Lucerne).

Richard Strauss later considered this period of friendship between the great composer and the maturing philosopher as "one of the century's most significant moments."[53]

As he developed his ideas about 'genuine' culture, Nietzsche thought he discerned in Wagner's music the possibility of a rebirth of German culture. This sentiment is expressed in a letter to his friend Erwin Rohde:

> that precisely is music, and nothing else is. But I consider that if only a few hundred people of the next generation will have from music what I have from it, then I anticipate an entirely new culture.[54]

Nietzsche later altered his view of Wagner. In *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, Nietzsche explains the reasons for his youthful error:

> I interpreted Wagner's music as an expression of a Dionysian power of the soul; I believed I heard in it the earthquake with which a primordial force of life, dammed up from time immemorial, finally vents itself, indifferent to the possibility that everything that calls itself culture today might start tottering. It is plain what I misunderstood in, equally plain what I read into, Wagner and Schopenhauer—myself.[55]

Exactly when and why Nietzsche and Wagner's relationship began to strain is debated. The break was not due to any one event, but several contributing factors. Fischer-Dieskau suggests that these two men were tacitly always at odds, their estrangement coming about precisely in the area of aesthetics.[56] Walter Kaufmann argues that while many factors contributed to the break (such as what Bayreuth came to symbolise), the breach began when Nietzsche received a copy of *Parsifal*; the break was sealed by the philosopher's natural maturing into independence.[57] Bryan Magee agrees in principle with Kaufmann, arguing that the break was inevitable: "So great was Nietzsche's adulation of both Schopenhauer and Wagner...that he was going to have to throw it off if he was ever to become an independent personality."[58]

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[53] Gutman, 317.

[54] Letter to Erwin Rohde, after 21 December 1871. Nietzsche, *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 85.

[55] Nietzsche, 'We Antipodes,' *Nietzsche contra Wagner*. In subsequent references, *Nietzsche contra Wagner* will be abbreviated *NCW*.

[56] Fischer-Dieskau, 133.

The summer of 1876 saw the publication of Nietzsche's *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* and the first performances of Wagner's complete *Ring* cycle at the Bayreuth festival. In retrospect, it was also the beginning of the break between these two great men. Not only was Nietzsche dismayed by the philistine nature of Wagner's cult following, but he had also begun to feel an increasing distance from the composer himself. While outwardly Nietzsche and Wagner remained close friends, in reality their relationship was steadily deteriorating. Wagner, with a lingering fear that "Nietzsche [would] go his own way," was sensitive to any signs of disloyalty.[59] And despite his love for his friend, Nietzsche had private misgivings about Wagner, as evidenced by Nietzsche's notebooks.[60] The underlying strain in their friendship was only exacerbated by the Bayreuth festival. Nietzsche was disgusted by "the pathetic crowd of patrons…all very spoilt, very bored and unmusical as yowling cats." The "idle riff-raff of Europe," who descended upon the small German town, were not spectators worthy of a great cultural event.[61] More significantly, however, Nietzsche was disappointed with Wagner, who pandered to these rich bourgeois patrons, and sacrificed his ideals to his newfound fame and success.[62] After the festival, Nietzsche noted,

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[57] Kaufmann's introduction to his translation of *CW*, 605. Cf. Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 36-40.

[58] Magee, *The Tristan Chord*, 303.

[59] Förster-Nietzsche, *The Young Nietzsche*, 356.

[60] Ernest Newman makes note of this in his biography of Wagner, *The Life of Richard Wagner*, vol. 4, 432-35. Similarly, so does Fischer-Dieskau: "The posthumous works show that in 1874, two years before the first Festival, Nietzsche admitted to himself all that he found alien about Wagner" (134).

[61] Unpublished manuscript in the Nietzsche collection in the Goethe-Schiller Archiv at Weimar. Quoted in Ronald Hayman, *Nietzsche: A Critical Life*, 189.

> My mistake was to come to Bayreuth with an ideal. I was forced to experience the bitterest disappointment. The excess of ugliness, distortion, and overexcitement repulsed me vehemently.[63]

In one of his later works, *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, Nietzsche confessed,

> By the summer of 1876, during the time of the first *Festspiele*, I said farewell to Wagner in my heart. I suffer no ambiguity; and since Wagner had moved to Germany, he had condescended step by step to everything I despise—even anti-Semitism.[64]

Later that same year, Nietzsche and Wagner both visited friends in Sorrento, Italy. They met there on several occasions, but these were to be their last meetings for several years. The two friends did not expressly acknowledge the growing gap between them, and, after this meeting, continued to maintain correspondence. Their relationship, however, was irreparably strained. When they again met in 1878, unbeknownst to them, it was to be their final meeting.

With Wagner's final opera, *Parsifal*, Nietzsche completely lost any of the remaining hope he had once placed in the composer as a source of cultural renewal. In Nietzsche's view, with *Parsifal* Wagner compromised his artistic integrity by exploiting Christianity for theatrical effect to gain the public's approval. Nietzsche turned away from Wagner, whom he now regarded as decadent: "Richard Wagner, apparently most triumphant, but in truth a decaying and despairing *décadent*, suddenly sank down, helpless and broken, before the Christian cross."[65] Despite the break with his old friend, however, Nietzsche remained continually grateful to Wagner for having awakened his own musical self and guided him through "the labyrinth of the modern soul."[66] It is necessary, Nietzsche reflected at the end of his publishing career, for one first to be a follower of Wagner if one is to understand modern times: "Wagner sums up modernity. There is no way out, one must first become a Wagnerian."[67]

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[62] Magee, *The Tristan Chord*, 310; Fischer-Dieskau, 140-41.

[63] Quoted in Fischer-Dieskau, 139.

[64] Nietzsche, 'How I Broke Away From Wagner,' *NCW*, 1.

[65] IbidIn Kaufmann's translation it is "decadent," but in the original text it is "*décadent*."

Much has been written and even more speculated about this friendship. For the most part, the Nietzsche-Wagner relationship is only of historical and biographical concern. One does not need to understand fully Nietzsche's relationship with Wagner to begin accessing Nietzsche's philosophic texts: the 'Wagner' of Nietzsche's concern is much more than a personal matter.[68] Further, that Nietzsche later repudiated his hope in Wagner does not necessarily invalidate the philosophic analysis upon which it was based. One may regard it as less a mistake in Nietzsche's theoretical understanding than an error in his prudential judgment. Retrospectively, Nietzsche reflected on his error:

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[66] Nietzsche, 'Preface,' *CW*. In this text Nietzsche stresses his gratitude to Wagner, especially on this basis. See also Nietzsche's 'Second Postscript' and 'Epilogue' to *CW*.

[67] Ibid.

[68] However, much of Nietzsche's thought, especially with respect to Wagner, is often explained away precisely as a personal matter. For example, in *The Tristan Chord*, Magee argues that Wagner's intervention into Nietzsche's medical care (Wagner wrote to Nietzsche's doctor that he feared Nietzsche's blindness was due to masturbation), and the ensuing rumours, dealt Nietzsche a wound that "explains so many things" about Nietzsche's thought:

> [The rumours] explain why when [Nietzsche] talked about Wagner he was so often like a gored animal lashing out in blind fury. They explain why this behaviour began at the time when it did, and why, crucially, it was so oddly independent of his continuing perception of Wagner's greatness as both man and artist. They explain why his later diatribes are, if anything, more about Wagner's personal character than about his works, and also the forms they most commonly take...while at the same time being so disappointingly unbruising to the works themselves; and they explain a lot of apparently muddled chronology in what seem to be contradictory reactions and statements, especially about *Parsifal*. (337-8)

While not dismissing the personal effect of this event on Nietzsche, it is a gross oversimplification to reduce Nietzsche's thought to this one event. Not only does Magee fail to take into account Nietzsche's earlier doubts and reservations about Wagner's greatness, but, in approaching Nietzsche's works with this belief, he overlooks alternative reasons for, and the possible legitimacy of Nietzsche's attacks on Wagner.

> But suppose I was wrong in what I wrote: at least my error dishonored neither them nor me. It *is* something to err in *such a way*! It *is* also something for precisely *me* to be led astray by such errors.[69]

As Nietzsche later argues with respect to Wagner, it is doubtful whether there has been another great thinker in all history who started out so greatly in error; yet, the way in which he did so had greatness in it, hence was extraordinarily fruitful (8/1). Thus, it remains that much is to be learned from Nietzsche's philosophizing on 'the case of Wagner.'

iii. The fourth *Untimely Meditation*

There are several challenges to interpreting *Wagner in Bayreuth*. First, this essay deals with a historical event and an 'actual' man, allowing the reader to compare Nietzsche's explanation with historical accounts, as well as Nietzsche's privates notes from the same period and his later criticisms. Seen in this light, Nietzsche's treatment of both Wagner and Bayreuth are curious: the philosopher paints a glorified picture of Wagner and exaggerates the merits of the festival. Many, including Wagner and Nietzsche, have noted the discrepancy between the Wagner portrayed in the fourth 'untimely one' and the historical man, leading the reader to question the reason for this.[70]

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[69] From an unpublished draft for a preface to a collected edition of the *Untimely Meditations* (written by Nietzsche in 1885). Quoted in Breazeale's introduction to Hollingdale's translation of the *Untimely Meditations*, xxvi-xxvii.

[70] Upon the receipt of *Wagner in Bayreuth*, Wagner remarked to Nietzsche, "How did you come to know me so well?" To others, however, he confessed he could not recognise himself in Nietzsche's essay. In *The Tristan Chord*, Magee interprets Wagner's mixed response:

> Actually, I think he recognized [Nietzsche's description of himself] only too well. His displeasure at having some of these things proclaimed to the world in print by the person supposed to be his most useful acolyte seems to have

On the surface, the essay is eulogistic in tone; Nietzsche sympathetically reinterprets Wagner's past, cosmetising his motivations, abilities and insights, and celebrating his accomplishments. Perhaps this can be explained as Nietzsche saying a gracious goodbye to his dear friend; having realised that Wagner could not meet his expectations, Nietzsche had to go forward on his own.[71] Speculations aside, Nietzsche himself testifies that at issue in *Wagner at Bayreuth* is neither the accuracy of his portrayal of Wagner nor psychological questions about him. Rather, what is of the utmost importance is the idealised picture to which Wagner points. Looking back on the fourth *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche reflects,

> What I, in my 'younger years', once wrote about Schopenhauer and Richard Wagner—or rather, what I *painted* about them, and perhaps in an all too audacious, overly-confident and overly-youthful 'fresco' style—is something I certainly have no desire to

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> actually outweighed his pleasure at the just appreciations of his genius they accompanied. (310)

The accuracy of Nietzsche's description of Wagner probably lies somewhere between these two claims. While it is true that in many regards Nietzsche all too accurately portrays Wagner, Nietzsche also took many liberties in describing Wagner, idealizing and perfecting his talent and artistic achievements, and molding him into the highest type of artist. While Wagner surely welcomed such praise, this does not necessarily imply that he believed Nietzsche's essay to be an accurate portrayal of himself.

[71] Nietzsche's sister, Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, characterises the fourth 'untimely one' as such a good bye, in her biography, *The Young Nietzsche*:

> Thoughts of all the blessed hours of friendship and intimate association filled his memory, and he asked himself, almost with terror, what his life would have been without Wagner and his Art! Over-flowing with the deepest gratitude, he summoned up all the feelings he had in this connection for the last sixteen years, or thereabouts; and thus the sorrowing disciple, who was a disciple no longer, wrote his second letter of farewell [the first being to Schopenhauer], 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth.' (368)

Fischer-Dieskau suggests that this farewell was made clear by Nietzsche in *Human, All Too Human*, which was his next work published after *Wagner in Bayreuth*:

> In revising the Dionysian concept, Nietzsche bade farewell to Wagner, whom he calls 'Artist' and consigns to the area of the 'Sunset of Art'...The sunset of art, according to Nietzsche, will be followed by a sunrise of philosophy whose aim must be to reevaluate all values. The variations on these new themes in the addenda making up the second volume, especially the thoughts on a future without Christianity and on the vices of the Germans, were just the thing to finalize the break with Wagner. (164-65)

> examine today as 'true' or 'false'…At that time, moreover, when I had resolved to paint portraits of 'the philosopher' and 'the artist'—to render, as it were, my own 'categorical imperative': at such a time it was also an inestimable benefit for me not to have to apply my own colors to an empty canvas containing nothing real, but rather to be able to paint, so to speak, upon shapes that were already sketched out in advance.[72]

Similarly, in a letter published in the magazine *Kunstwart*, December 1888 (five years after Wagner's death), Nietzsche asserted that the fourth *Untimely Meditation* actually had very little to do "with the husband of Cosima."[73] Almost a year later, he elaborated this claim in *Ecce Homo*, stating that with Wagner and Schopenhauer,

> I caught hold of two famous and as yet altogether undiagnosed types, as one catches hold of an opportunity, in order to say something, in order to have at hand a few more formulas, signs, means of language…Plato employed Socrates in this fashion, as a [sign language for Plato].[74]

While Wagner may have failed historically, the philosopher made use of him to elucidate a higher concept of culture and education.

That there is philosophical substance in Nietzsche's reflections on Wagner and Bayreuth presented in the fourth *Untimely Meditation*, and that these reflections are not limited to biographical concerns, is demonstrated by Nietzsche's later treatment of his early essay. Despite his change in opinion with respect to Wagner, Nietzsche did not choose to expand or revise the fourth *Untimely Meditation* in 1886, nor add a new preface self-criticizing his treatment of Wagner (as he did for *The Birth of Tragedy*).[75] This is testimony to the fact that Nietzsche, years later, still felt that *Wagner in Bayreuth* held true to his thought and was not the result of earlier naivety. Thus, we as readers must also accept the fourth *Untimely Meditation* as Nietzsche left it, and leave the more comprehensive questions about Nietzsche's relationship with Wagner to the biographers and historiographers.

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[72] From an unpublished draft for a preface to a collected edition of the *Untimely Meditations*. See note 69 of the introduction to this thesis.

[73] Quoted in Schaberg, 165. Rather than limit himself to biographical questions, the reader is to follow Nietzsche's urging in the 'Epilogue' to *CW*: "Let us recover our breath in the end by getting away for a moment from the narrow world to which every question about the worth of *persons* condemns the spirit." Nietzsche is not concerned here so much with Wagner the man, but with the artist in modernity.

[74] Nietzsche, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'The Untimely Ones,'' *EH*, 3.

Another complication for the interpretation of this text is that it was very personal for Nietzsche. Regarding it as primarily a private matter, he was at first reluctant to publish *Wagner in Bayreuth*. In a letter to Rohde dated 26 September 1875, Nietzsche wrote, "this work only has the value, for me, of reorientation beyond the most difficult point of our experiences hitherto."[76] In part, the personal nature of his fourth *Untimely Meditation* is bound with the fact that Nietzsche was working through doubts regarding Wagner and struggling to find his independence:

> Without realizing it, I was speaking only for myself—indeed, at bottom, only of myself…Anyone who reads [this] text with a young and fiery soul will perhaps guess the solemn vow with which I then bound myself to my life—with which I resolved to live *my own* life.[77]

Nietzsche, in defining Wagner's task, was defining his own future. Retrospectively, Nietzsche elaborates this, his task:

> Now that I am looking back from a certain distance upon the conditions of which these essays bear witness, I do not wish to

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[75] In 1886, Nietzsche obtained the publication rights to his earlier works, which he subsequently expanded, adding new prefaces and other material, and reissued. There were only two exceptions: in a letter of 29 Aug 1886 to his publisher, Nietzsche instructed that along with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "the four *Untimely Meditations* are the only ones that I wish to leave as they are." Quoted in Schaberg, 135.

[76] Quoted in Fischer-Dieskau, 131.

[77] From an unpublished draft for a preface to a collected edition of the *Untimely Meditations*. See note 69 of the introduction to this thesis.

> deny that at bottom they speak only of me. The essay *Wagner in Bayreuth* is a vision of my future, while in *Schopenhauer as Educator* my innermost history, my *becoming* is inscribed. Above all, my promise![78]

Nietzsche's future, as he saw it, rested on how he perceived the philosopher: the ultimate ruler and shaper of human life, whose task is to interpret the world and establish the horizons men live within, and to be the creator and physician of culture. According to Nietzsche, the activity of the philosopher is not purely rational, but involves a creative act similar, but superior to, the creation of music and poetry.

The aforementioned considerations of the text indicate that *Wagner in Bayreuth* has a dual nature. Using Wagner and the festival at Bayreuth as his platform, Nietzsche simultaneously addresses two issues, both of which are important to bear in mind throughout the text: the first is personal, pertaining to Nietzsche—his future, his task, and his view of philosophy; the second issue is philosophic, dealing with questions pertaining to the nature of the artist, and the relationship between art, culture, and mankind. As the reader will see, elements of this later discussion include mankind's need for art, Nietzsche's response to Socrates' challenge to the dramatist, and a diagnostic analysis of art and culture in modernity. On the one hand, these are two separate issues. On the other, they converge in Nietzsche's ultimate view of the philosopher as the highest artist and the creator of culture.

As indicated, the focus of this thesis is predominantly the fourth *Untimely Meditation*. Yet, where relevant, reference shall be made to other published works of Nietzsche; his correspondence, private notes, as well as secondary literature that help illuminate the questions at hand and situate the debate in a larger context will also be consulted. A comprehensive inquiry into Nietzsche's thought—on Wagner, or anything else—would require a comprehensive study of the entire Nietzsche corpus. This thesis, however, is largely limited to his earlier writings. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche raises the question of what tragedy meant to the Greeks and how it enabled them to live with strength and courage. In the first three *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche inquires into 'genuine' culture. In *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche expands upon these themes, but speaks more explicitly about the state of art in modernity and modern man's need for a new art. As part of his inquiry, Nietzsche looks to Wagner as an exemplar of what is necessary. Hence, this examination will touch on universal aspects of art, but will focus on problems particular to modernity. While this study is likely to raise more questions than it answers, asking questions *is* the business of philosophy, and much can be learned without fully resolving the issues. Simply having a clear understanding of the important questions is knowledge not to be underestimated, since it is sufficient to determine an entire way of life.

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[78] Nietzsche, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'The Untimely Ones,'' *EH*, 3.

CHAPTER ONE: *UNTIMELY MEDITATIONS*

Wagner in Bayreuth is one of Nietzsche's earlier texts, written in the period which includes *The Birth of Tragedy* and the earlier three *Untimely Meditations*.[1] In each of his *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche presents his observations of modernity with 'simplicity' and 'honesty,' saying "no" with "sovereign contempt" to the assumptions and opinions of his time.[2] "To overcome his time in himself, to become 'timeless,'" Nietzsche states, is the "first and last" demand the philosopher makes of himself.[3] To achieve such transcendence, the philosopher must "engage in the hardest combat" with "whatever marks him as the child of his time."[4] The *Untimely Meditations* testifies to the process Nietzsche went through in becoming his true self—a genuine philosopher who transcended the limitations of his age, being close in spirit to the ancient Greeks yet reaching forward to the future, and who looked on man with what he later identified as 'the eye of Zarathustra:' "an eye that beholds the whole fact of man at tremendous distance."[5] The 'untimely ones' are important to the whole of Nietzsche's thought, as many Nietzschean themes first found expression in these four essays.

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[1] *The Birth of Tragedy* was first published in 1872. A third edition was published in 1886 with the addition of Nietzsche's 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism.' The *Untimely Meditations* were Nietzsche's next four publications. The first, published in August 1873, is *David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer*; the second, published in February 1874, is *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*; the third, published in October 1874, is *Schopenhauer as Educator*. *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* was published in July 1876.

[2] In 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'The Untimely Ones,'' *Ecce Homo*,Nietzsche describes the nature of his 'untimely ones:'

> untimely types *par excellence*, full of sovereign contempt for everything around them that was called 'Empire,' 'culture,' 'Christianity,' 'Bismarck,' 'success'—Schopenhauer and Wagner *or*, in one word, Nietzsche (1).

Nietzsche discusses what it is to be untimely in *Schopenhauer as Educator*:

> It was thus truly roving through wishes to imagine I might discover a true philosopher as an educator who could raise me above my insufficiencies insofar as these originated in the age and teach me again to be *simple* and *honest* in thought and life, that is to say to be untimely, that word understood in the profoundest sense; for men have now become so complex and many-sided they are bound to become dishonest whenever they speak at all, make assertions and try to act in accordance with them. (2)

In subsequent references, *Schopenhauer as Educator* will be abbreviated *SE*.

[3] Nietzsche, 'Preface,' *CW*. Nietzsche also describes this necessary trait of the philosopher in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

> More and more it seems to me that the philosopher, being *of necessity* a man of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, has always found himself, and *had* to find himself, in contradiction to his today: his enemy was ever the ideal of today. So far all these extraordinary furtherers of man whom one calls philosophers, though they themselves have rarely felt like friends of wisdom but rather like disagreeable fools and dangerous question marks, have found their task, their hard, unwanted, inescapable task but eventually also the greatness of their task, in being the bad conscience of their time. (212)

In subsequent references, *Beyond Good and Evil* will be abbreviated *BGE*.

Before delving into *Wagner in Bayreuth*, it is useful to consider Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations* in general; doing so illuminates the broader context of the fourth 'untimely one' and Nietzsche's larger task. A natural place to begin is with consideration of the title of this collection of essays. Christened *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* by Nietzsche, the title reflects how he perceived these essays as a whole. The German title is commonly translated as 'Untimely Meditations.' However, there are variant translations that attempt to capture the meaning of Nietzsche's characterization of these essays: for example, 'Thoughts out of Season,' 'Untimely Considerations,' or 'Unfashionable Observations.' In English, 'untimely' is the most literal rendering of *Unzeitgemässe*. More than being merely 'unfashionable' or 'unseasonable,' these essays transcend their time; from a perspective outside of his time, they express the philosopher's view of his time. Not only does Nietzsche educate modern readers about our time, but also against our time in order that we may act to change our present situation. This is what Nietzsche called "untimely"—"that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come."[6] 'Considerations,' on the other hand, may be a more precise translation of *Betrachtungen*, as it distinguishes Nietzsche's undertaking from the more well-known Cartesian conception of meditation.

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[4] Ibid. In *The Case of Wagner*, Nietzsche identifies Wagner as one such combatant.

[5] Ibid.

The *Untimely Meditations*, following Nietzsche's writing and publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, mark a decisive point in his intellectual and philosophical development. Whereas the substance of *The Birth of Tragedy* was heavily influenced by Wagner—Nietzsche ingeniously developed the composer's theory of the Apollonian and the Dionysian (which Wagner had propounded in the opening paragraphs of his essay *Art and Revolution*), and focused on Wagnerian drama as the rebirth of tragedy—with the first *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche began to follow his own path. He had a different task in mind; one which he identified to a friend in a letter:

> My whole concern is first to get rid of all the polemical, negative stuff in me; I want to sing assiduously the whole scale of my hostile feelings, up and down, really outrageously, so that 'the vault resounds.' Later—five years later—I shall chuck all the polemics and think of a good work. But now my heart is downright congested with aversion and oppression; so I must expectorate, decently or indecently, but once and for all.[7]

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche rewords this early task: "The four Untimely Ones are certainly warlike. They prove that I was no Jack the Dreamer, that I take pleasure in fencing."[8] In these essays, Nietzsche is waging a battle against the superficiality of modern notions of the 'free spirit,' and modern conceptions of culture. He rejects modern suggestions to improve mankind—especially those of the Enlightenment—seeing them as pernicious and detrimental to the human race:

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[6] Nietzsche, 'Forward,' *UD*.

[7] 19 March 1874. Quoted in Magee, *The Tristan Chord*, 302.

[8] Nietzsche, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'The Untimely Ones,'' *EH*, 1.

> to this day nothing is more foreign and less related to me than the whole European and American species of *libres penseurs*. I am…profoundly at odds with them, as incorrigible blockheads and buffoons of 'modern ideas'…They also want in their own way to 'improve' mankind, in their own image; against what I am, what I *want*, they would wage an irreconcilable war if they understood me: all of them still believe in the 'ideal.'[9]

Nietzsche proposes a radically different battle plan for what could and should be changed with respect to modern man. He does so based on his deep insight into the human psyche and what is necessary for us to live well—not well in the sense of comfortable and content, but to live life with strength and vigour, so as to realise the ultimate height of human potential. Nietzsche's thought plumbs the depths of Western culture and the nature of modernity, exposing the danger of human degeneration. What Nietzsche wrote about the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer can be applied reflexively to himself: Nietzsche's writings "can be used as a mirror of his age because he strove against it and expelled it from him, thus healing and purifying his being."[10] Conceiving himself a citizen of a different time, Nietzsche harbours great hopes: his desire is "to awaken [his] time to life and so live on [himself] in this awakened life."[11] Thus, Nietzsche jokes, with his first *Untimely Meditation* he made his entrance into society with a duel.[12]

In all of his 'untimely ones,' Nietzsche is concerned with the creation and preservation of genuine culture. In the first two essays, he directs his eye, full of

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[9] Ibid., 2.

[10] Nietzsche, *SE*, 3.

[11] Ibid., 1.

[12] Nietzsche, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'The Untimely Ones,'' *EH*, 2.

"ruthless contempt," against inauthentic German 'culture' and the poisoning effects of science and scholarship on life.[13] Yet, like *Beyond Good and Evil*, the *Untimely Meditations* are not only "No-saying, *No-doing*" in their critique of modernity, but also contain "pointers to a contrary type that is as little modern as possible—a noble, Yes-saying type."[14] The latter two 'untimely ones' especially point to a higher conception of education and culture. Through the figures of Schopenhauer and Wagner, Nietzsche presents his idea of how mankind should be transformed and how the concept of culture can be restored. Nietzsche was preoccupied with the ability of an individual to influence and shape culture. As he saw it, greatness is produced by the dialectical interaction between a few creative men of great talent and a cultivated people as a whole. Nietzsche sought to stimulate enough men, both leaders and supporters, in order to get this process off the ground, as it were. It does not take many such men—history shows that the culture of Hellenic Greece was the fruit of less than three dozen individuals, while Nietzsche himself argues that the whole Renaissance was the result of one hundred men.[15] At the foundation of the invigoration of culture Nietzsche saw the need for a form of music to integrate all the resources of the various arts, serve as "the Dionysian mirror of the world," and unite men in harmony.[16] His account of music as the invigoration of culture is partly treated in *Wagner in Bayreuth*.

In his *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche reminds us of the original definition and goal of culture. Typically, people today understand culture as roughly synonymous with

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[13] Ibid., 1.

[14] Nietzsche, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'Beyond Good and Evil,'' *EH*, 1.

[15] Nietzsche, *UD*, 2.

[16] Nietzsche, *BT*, 19.

'way of life' or 'traditions,' extending this definition to encompass all characteristic expressions and modes of life.[17] Sometimes the word is used to describe sophistication, education, self-improvement, or refinement of taste. Anthropologists commonly use the term to describe social values, beliefs, and rules of conduct. Originally, however, culture signified an ideal—seen in light of a teleological understanding of nature—to be sought after. Needless to say, such an ideal has been lost in modernity.

Still, the fact remains that etymologically, the original meaning of culture was nurture aimed at perfecting man's nature:

> From the beginning, culture has always been associated with the process of nurture. Deriving from the Latin world *cultura* (form the root *colere*, 'to protect, cultivate, inhabit, or honor with worship') the earliest uses of culture always linked it to natural processes of tending and preservation.[18]

Culture, viewed in this manner, requires tending to, such that it properly 'cultivates' men—both individuals and whole peoples—with their specific nature in mind so that they can grow into their mature perfection. Noticeably, in this sense, culture bears similarity to agriculture. In the case of the latter, it is essential to the growth of a plant that it not only be given things it needs, such as suitable nourishment, water, air, and sunlight, but it must also be protected from harmful things, such as weeds and pests. Nietzsche develops this analogy between agriculture and culture:

> Culture is liberation, the removal of all the weeds, rubble and vermin that want to attack the tender buds of the plant, an outstreaming of light and warmth, the gentle rustling of nocturnal

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[17] My discussion of the original meaning of "culture" and what it has come to signify today in part draws from Jay Newman's discussion of its etymology in his book, *Inauthentic Culture and its Philosophical Critics*, 31-43.

[18] Giles Gunn, *The Culture of Criticism and the Criticism of Culture*, 6.

> rain, it is imitation and worship of nature where nature is in her motherly and merciful mood, it is the perfecting of nature....[19]

Plato saw culture in a similar light. In the *Republic*, Socrates provides the warriors with the musical and gymnastic education needed to perfect themselves for their political tasks, and accordingly censors harmful things, such as private property and most forms of pleasing poetry and music. As cultivating a plant requires knowledge specific to the plant in question (what is necessary for it to grow and thrive, and what is pernicious to its wellbeing), cultivating man to his perfection requires knowledge of human nature; thus, the highest culture rests on philosophy.

Nietzsche identifies the task of culture in *Schopenhauer as Educator*. Genuine culture, he argues, cultivates true nobility, and thereby realises the potential excellence of man; it works towards the production of the highest man, whose existence redeems nature and mankind.[20] Only a very few men reach the goal of nature—"those true *men, those who are no longer animals, the philosophers, artists and saints*." The rest of mankind lives under the "curse of the life of the animal;" like the animals, we "suffer from life and yet do not possess the power to turn the thorn of suffering against itself and to understand [our] existence metaphysically." Unable to "endure those moments of profoundest contemplation for very long"—those moments that are necessary to understand and thus redeem existence—we require those strong, true men to lift us up, so that "we should raise our head above the water at all, even if only a little, and observe what stream it is in which we are so deeply immersed."[21] The man who recognises the enlightenment reached by these true men, yet himself lacks the ability to reach enlightenment himself, will perhaps be consumed by vain longing, envy, and malice. Consolingly, Nietzsche assures such a man that for him there is a "new circle of duties:" to support the cultivation of nobility and the promotion of the highest men. These duties are not those of a solitary man, but necessarily set one "in the midst of a mighty community held together, not by external forms and regulations, but by a fundamental idea." This fundamental idea is culture, which presents this community with one task:

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[19] Nietzsche, *SE*, 1.

[20] Nietzsche develops this idea in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "A people is a detour of nature to get to six or seven great men.—Yes, and then to get around them" (126). Undoubtedly, our egalitarian sentiments balk at Nietzsche's claim that culture should exist to produce a single great man. However, if one takes pause to consider how rare great talent and genius are, not to mention the role of fortune in human affairs, one may come to appreciate that the production of one great man is a remarkable achievement that any culture can be rightly proud of.

> *to promote the production of the philosopher, the artist and the saint within us and without us and thereby to work at the perfecting of nature.* For, as nature needs the philosopher, so does it need the artist, for the achievement of a metaphysical goal, that of its own self-enlightenment, so that it may at last behold as a clear and finished picture that which it could see only obscurely in the agitation of its evolution—for the end, that is to say, of self-knowledge.[22]

The production of the philosopher is the highest task of culture, which brings the dialectical process round full circle: culture creates the philosopher, who in turn, advances culture.

In the first *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche defines culture as "above all, unity of artistic style in all the expressions of the life of a people."[23] On this definition, culture is the unification of all the threads of a society—religion, science, art, education, economics, tradition, etc.—in which each thread is congruent with the character of the people of that society. These threads are woven together, forming a coherent whole that expresses a common meaning and purpose in life. Within this environment man's nature can be fulfilled and whole men created. To the contrary, what we moderns typically have in mind when contemplating culture resembles "a many-colored cloak decorated in all hues," made of a collection of disconnected patches:[24]

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[21] This is an implicit reference to Plato, *Phaedo*, 108d-110b.

[22] Nietzsche, *SE*, 5.

[23] Nietzsche, *DS*, 1.

> The German amasses around him the form and colours, productions and curiosities of every age and every clime, and produces the modern fairground motley which his learned colleagues are then obliged to observe and classify as 'the modern as such,' while he himself remains seated calmly in the midst of the tumult.[25]

Nietzsche argues that modern culture, falling short on substance, is limited to offering a pleasing appearance and decoration; this understanding of culture significantly differs from genuine culture. Lacking substance and unity, we are a collection of antithetical beliefs and ways of life (each of which have their own inner coherence, but may clash when in contact with one another), reflected in our museums and art-galleries, and evidenced by our political policies of multi-culturalism.[26] The once strong and vibrant culture of Western civilization is disintegrating; the signs of decay affect all vital dimensions of life. While most moderns do not share this assessment of our culture, we do not have to recognise consciously its degradation to feel the effects. Nietzsche saw our universal distress, stemming from our shaken culture, revealed in our art:

> in vain does one depend imitatively on all the great productive periods and natures; in vain does one accumulate the entire 'world-literature' around modern man for his comfort; in vain does one place oneself in the midst of the art styles and artists of

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[24] Plato, *Republic*, 557c. All references to Plato's *Republic* refer to the Stephanus pages.

[25] Nietzsche, *DS*, 1.

[26] Again, our egalitarian sentiments balk at such claims, perhaps concluding that Nietzsche is a cultural imperialist. However, to argue against 'culture' as a mere aggregation of artifacts is not to argue for the subjugation of all other cultures to the West. Moreover, Western culture is not the only victim of this trend—other cultures are also affected. As they are broken apart into fragments to join our mosaic, their unity and thus power is weakened, and they are reduced to artifacts on store shelves, and exotic dances and dishes.

> all ages, so that one may give names to them as Adam did to the beasts: one still remains eternally hungry, the 'critic' without joy and energy, the Alexandrian man, who is at bottom a librarian and corrector of proofs, and wretchedly goes blind from the dust of books and from printers' errors.[27]

Consequently, we lack a broader, deeper, fully coherent view of ourselves and our place in the world. We are superficial in nature; embracing everything lightly, nothing profoundly affects us. As a result, we are restless cosmopolitans, continually seeking novelty and new experiences, dressing ourselves in the art and philosophy of past ages in order to hide our spiritual poverty and to escape from the boredom of our age. Underneath our glimmering, flashy appearance, Nietzsche contends, we moderns are weak and exhausted; reduced to pale, ghostlike images of men from stronger ages. Thus, our decadent culture prevents us from living well, as only the fulfillment of one's nature allows. Most dangerous of all, our culture lacks the substance to cultivate philosophers, thereby threatening the continued existence of philosophy itself.

If the sickness of our culture is not recognised, nor the root causes identified, then there is no prospect of overcoming our illness and restoring our decadent civilization to a state of health. We need a cultural physician to diagnose our ills and to prescribe treatment. Nietzsche regarded himself as such a physician; his writings present both his diagnosis and his cure. However, our so-called 'man of culture' works against the physician: "he wants lyingly to deny the existence of the universal sickness and thus obstructs the physicians."[28] Hence, it is necessary that we first acknowledge the ill-health of our culture and then seek to understand the source of the problems. In *Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche teaches us how to begin this process:

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[27] Nietzsche, *BT*, 18.

[28] Nietzsche, *SE*, 4.

> one has to adopt a completely new viewpoint and be able for once to regard the commonplace and everyday as something very uncommon and complex…but if one is as accustomed to [the musty corrupted air of our world of art] as our cultivated people are, one no doubt believes it necessary for one's health and feels ill if deprived of it for any length of time. (4/2)

As patients sometimes recoil from unpleasant or painful treatments, we too may react against Nietzsche's prescription.[29] However, that the antidote to our ills may cause us suffering is no "evidence against the correctness of the chosen treatment."[30] As with medical treatment, the patient is not always the best judge of what is necessary: it may be necessary to sacrifice a limb in order to save the body.

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[29] Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 425e-426b.

[30] Nietzsche, *UD*, 10.

CHAPTER TWO: SECTION 1

i. Overview: section 1

Life is full of beginnings, the importance of which is recognised in the old adage: 'well begun, half done.' The beginning of any work—be it the education of children, the founding of a state, the start of a new relationship, the opening of an orchestral piece, or the first paragraph of a work of philosophy—is significant, as it shapes what the work will grow into and sets the terms on which it will do so. The Platonic Socrates emphasises the importance of beginnings:

> Don't you know that the beginning is the most important part of every work and that this is especially so with anything young and tender? For at that stage it's most plastic, and each thing assimilates itself to the model whose stamp anyone wishes to give to it.[1]

While Socrates stresses the importance of beginnings at the outset of his discussion of the education of the guardian class in the City in Speech, his claim is not limited to young children; it reflects back on the text in which it is recorded, emphasising an important part of the text as a whole—the beginning. Nietzsche, like his Greek predecessor, knew that how a work begins is very important; the fourth *Untimely Meditation* is no exception to this principle. The beginning of *Wagner in Bayreuth* is significant in a number of ways: it sets up the issue at hand; clears away some of the reader's prejudices and misconceptions; raises important questions; and provides instruction on how to approach the text in a Nietzschean manner. Moreover, in section 1 Nietzsche looks to another important beginning: the festival at Bayreuth. Nietzsche provides clues and ideas as to the potential significance of the festival, which, left to the reader to make of them what he can, warrant further consideration in light of the balance of the text. This chapter will provide a commentary on the first section of *Wagner in Bayreuth*, bearing in mind its import as the beginning of Nietzsche's essay.

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[1] Plato, *Republic*, 377ab.

ii. The great event

Turning to the text, Nietzsche begins with a brief analysis of a rare, yet universally significant phenomenon: the great event. Written with one eye on the first festival to be held at Bayreuth, Nietzsche examines what greatness is generally and how it comes into being. This is a necessary first step: before considering the greatness of the event at Bayreuth, Nietzsche must set the terms on which to judge the festival. Thus he begins: "No event possesses greatness in itself." Rather, an event is made great by the necessary combination of two factors: "greatness of spirit in those who accomplish it and greatness of spirit in those who experience it" (1/1). The German word translated here as 'spirit' is *Sinn*, meaning mind, perception, appreciation, consciousness, sense, or awareness of one's own being.[2] By isolating 'spirit' [*Sinn*] as a required element, Nietzsche argues that greatness is limited to the rational, self-conscious animal: man. It is only by virtue of man's awareness of himself, his actions, and the world around him that great events come into being.

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[2] Hollingdale translates both *Sinn* and *Geist* as 'spirit,' however, there is a difference between these two words in German. There is no standard equivalent to *Geist* in English, but it means soul, inner feeling, psyche, mind, consciousness, and, quite literally, ghost. The problem is demonstrated by the fact that Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* is translated both as *Phenomenology of Mind* and *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

The Nietzschean definition of greatness counters common conceptions, which often look solely to the magnitude and scope of an event. Enormous things have happened, however, that men know little about or soon forget:

> the disappearance of whole constellations, the destruction of entire peoples, the foundation of vast states or the prosecution of wars involving tremendous forces and tremendous losses: the breath of history has blown away many things of that kind as though they were flakes of snow (1/1).

Contrary to the opinion that size matters, Nietzsche allows for small-scale happenings accomplished with 'spirit' [*Sinn*] to be the greatest events in history. For example, an idea can impact men with such force that it changes the course of human history, thereby making the man of thought potentially the greatest historical actor.[3] Having drawn a careful reader's attention to the importance of ideas, Nietzsche opens up the possibility that it is the idea of the festival of Bayreuth that is of great significance.

Despite the tremendous importance of 'spirit' [*Sinn*], it is in and of itself insufficient to realise a great event. Of import is the quality of 'spirit' [*Sinn*]: *greatness* of 'spirit' [*Sinn*] is necessary for an event to be truly great. In light of this demanding criterion, most of mankind's accomplishments fall short of greatness. Nietzsche's reference to war points to an example contemporary to his time of an event that failed to be great: the Franco-Prussian war. In Nietzsche's day, the German victory over France was viewed as a great event, confirming the superiority of German culture. Nietzsche, critical of this opinion, argues that the German victory attested to military superiority, but proved nothing with respect to the superiority of German culture.[4] According to the Nietzschean formula, the Franco-Prussian war falls short of greatness because the German people themselves lacked sufficient greatness to either accomplish or experience a great deed. This particular war was only one of the many political events which compose a constantly moving world; the event itself passed away without making a significant imprint on man.

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[3] Of further import to Nietzsche's own task is his observation that great events can be both destructive and formative. The formative element of Nietzsche's task is expressed in his book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. This 'yes-saying' book presents his positive teaching on the human spirit, works to inspire readers, and attract allies for "the great war," offering a great replacement to the status quo that Nietzsche seeks to destroy. Following the publication of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil* presents Nietzsche's teaching on the destructive or 'no-saying' element of his task. Nietzsche diagnoses the decay of modern culture and, in light of the far-reaching ills of modernity, seeks to destroy those aspects of modernity which are detrimental to the human spirit. Only after understanding Nietzsche's 'no-saying' task could Nietzsche's followers then work on the 'yes-saying.' Nietzsche, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'Beyond Good and Evil,'' *EH*.

Nietzsche's example of the snowflake suggests another issue: there is no blueprint for great events. As with snowflakes, no two great events are alike. Yet, there is a formal requirement: a great event does not exist in isolation; it requires the connection of the great man who performs the deed—a "man of force"—and, at the least, one recipient worthy of its greatness. While it is necessary that the man executing the deed be great in spirit, his individual greatness comes to naught without a worthy recipient with the capacity to appreciate his deed, and so be properly affected: "even the individual deed of a man great in himself lacks greatness if it is brief and without resonance or effect." This problem is similar to a famous riddle: if a tree were to fall in a forest and no one was present to hear it, would it make a sound? While the falling tree would disturb the molecules in the surrounding air and make waves, it would not make what men commonly understand as sound. This is because sound itself does not exist apart from the ear, which translates the waves into something audible. Likewise, if a "man of force" performs a deed, and there is no affected recipient who can not only perceive the deed, but appreciate its quality, understand its significance, translate it into something meaningful, and thus guarantee its effect, the deed might momentarily disturb the surrounding environment, but will fail to make any sort of impact on mankind. In Nietzsche's words, the deed "strikes a reef and sinks from sight having produced no impression" (1/1). Hence, Nietzsche makes men responsible for the success or failure of every event of potential greatness.

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[4] Nietzsche asserts this view in *Ecce Homo*: "There is no more malignant misunderstanding than to believe that the great military success of the Germans proved anything in favour of this 'culture'—or, of all things, its triumph over France" (1). This is the theme of the first *Untimely Meditation, David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer*, of which Nietzsche remarks: "[t]he noise it evoked was in every sense splendid. I had touched the sore spot of a victorious nation—that its victory was *not* a cultural event but perhaps, perhaps something altogether different" (2). Nietzsche, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'The Untimely Ones,' *EH*.

For Nietzsche (and men like him) great events are accompanied by a particular fear: "whenever we see an event approaching we are overcome with the fear that those who will experience it will be unworthy." If this fear proves true, mankind loses something potentially awesome. The loss is all the more regrettable in light of the reality that great events are rare, infrequently appearing throughout history. Ultimately, however, responsibility rests with the "man of force." The 'doer' of the great deed must make certain that his actions are not left to the winds of chance—he must be the master of his own fortune.[5] As such, the "man of force" must know his own time, and determine a necessary and suitable course of action. He must take correct aim in his actions to ensure that his spiritual arrow will reach worthy men—"recipients adequate to the meaning of his gift"—be it in his own time, or in the future (1/1).

Perhaps the finest example of this relationship between great-spirited 'doers' and worthy recipients is found in ancient Greece. Greek dramatists, such as Aeschylus and Sophocles, were men of exceptional intellect and talent. However, the greatness of their tragic art was ensured by the Greek people. A perennial obstacle to greatness in dramatic art is that the poet must always aim to please the public, most of whom attend drama for the sake of entertainment. If the people demand what is vulgar or are satisfied with what is mediocre, their demands will be reflected in the art of their times. Fortunately, the Greeks of Hellenic times were great in 'spirit' [*Sinn*] and appreciated the genius of their poets. Thus, the Greek people demanded highly of their poets, who, in turn, proved equal to the task. As the poets presented the people with better works, the people's aesthetic expectations were raised still higher. Through this dialectical process—the interplay between dramatist, audience and drama—the tragic drama of Hellenic Greece became some of the greatest art in the history of mankind.

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[5] Cf. Machiavelli, 'Chapter VI' and 'Chapter XXV,' *The Prince*.

iii. The first festival at Bayreuth

Against the background of this general discussion, Nietzsche turns to the anticipated event at Bayreuth, raising questions of the potential greatness of the upcoming festival. The event, Nietzsche expresses through the voice of Wagner, is the presentation of Wagner's "particular art" in "pure and undisfigured form to those who had demonstrated a serious interest in [his] art even though it had hitherto been presented to them only in impure and disfigured form" (1/1). Nietzsche provides no further explanation of this deed here. For now, this explanation suffices; Nietzsche is presently concerned with evaluating Bayreuth according to the terms of greatness he has just laid out.

On the surface, Nietzsche is confident that the festival at Bayreuth will prove to be a great event. He cheerfully downplays any doubts that a reader may have about the greatness of Bayreuth, prompting a well-disposed reader to concede that the festival will be great because what "is now taking place in Bayreuth is necessary and taking place at the right time." Nonetheless, Nietzsche acknowledges the possibility that there are those who "doubt Wagner's grasp of necessity itself," hence Wagner's mastery of fortune, thereby subtly inviting a cautious pause to consider the legitimacy of such doubt. It is important to note that Nietzsche is not suggesting one doubt the greatness of the idea behind Wagner's deed, but of Wagner's sense of necessity and hence his ability to realise this idea. Nietzsche responds to doubters with an admission reliant on faith: "To us with greater faith it must seem that [Wagner] believes in the greatness of his deed just as he does in the greatness of those who are to experience it." Nietzsche encourages these believers, whom it is subsequently revealed, are not the majority:

> All to whom this belief is accorded should feel proud of the fact, whether they be few or many—for that it is not accorded to everyone, neither to the whole of our age nor even to the German people as it stands at present (1/2).

Nietzsche's appeal to faith, however, is problematic. In light of the first paragraph of his essay, it is not enough to have faith: for an event to be truly great, it is necessary that those carrying out and experiencing the deed must be great themselves. Despite Nietzsche's outward claims, a more subtle reading of the text points to the possibility Nietzsche was not one of the 'faithful,' but that he too had doubts about Wagner's grasp of necessity. Thus, very early in the text, one suspects that there are two different stories about Wagner in Bayreuth.

Considering the potential greatness of Bayreuth, one must not only consider Wagner, the 'doer' of the deed, but also nature of the recipients of the deed—these are the spectators at the festival. Again, Nietzsche's rhetoric is crafted to assure the reader that the festival will be great: "In Bayreuth the spectator too is worth seeing, there is no doubt about that." Nietzsche argues in favour of the spectators, explaining that they recognise the Bayreuth festival to be an event worthy of support, which distinguishes them from the German people in general.[6] Nietzsche suggests that the spectators appreciate great things, whereas the general populous—the products of their age—are 'cultivated' by modern standards, and so cannot truly understand the untimely greatness of Wagner. It follows that the population at large can only approach Wagner in the "shape of parody." As people generally do with all things new and incomprehensible, they laugh. The spectators, to the contrary, Nietzsche credits with comprehending the greater significance of Bayreuth—recognizing how it is distinct from the art that surrounds it, they appreciate its unique value. These are the 'ideal' Bayreuth spectators, men who "will be felt to be untimely men: their home is not in this age but elsewhere, and it is elsewhere too that their explanation and justification is to be found" (1/3). Such 'untimely' spectators are the great recipients necessary for realizing the greatness of Wagner's deed. Yet, it remains to be seen if Nietzsche is idealizing those who will attend Bayreuth, or if what Nietzsche presents here in section 1 is an accurate portrayal of the spectators.

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[6] In his "Appeal to the German Nation" on behalf of the Bayreuth festival, Nietzsche chastises the German people for not only failing to support the festival, but for being antagonistic towards it. This, Nietzsche argues, threatens the greatness of the festival and the realization of his and Wagner's hopes: "It is you who have given rise to [our] fears; you do not wish to know what is going on, and out of sheer ignorance are about to prevent a great deed from being accomplished." Förster-Nietzsche, *The Nietzsche-Wagner Correspondence*, 190-93.

iv. Nietzsche in Bayreuth

From the group of 'untimely men' who, Nietzsche argues, are the spectators at Bayreuth, rises the greatest spectator imaginable: a "wise observer who moved from one century to another to compare noteworthy cultural movements." This spectator, like the traveler at the beginning of *Schopenhauer as Educator*, transcends his time, his penetrating eye viewing the event from above; he is at once an objective observer and a subjective participant. Nietzsche argues that at Bayreuth, such a worthy observer,

> would feel as though he had suddenly entered warmer water, like one swimming in a lake who approaches a current from a hot spring: this water must be coming from other, deeper sources, he says to himself, the water around it, which has in any case a shallower origin, does not account for it (1/3).

In order to speak thus, Nietzsche must be this most important spectator—one whose spirit can match the greatness of the idea of the Bayreuth festival, and hence worthy of Wagner's deed.[7] Understanding the deeper meaning of the Bayreuth festival, and properly affected, Nietzsche translates the idea behind Wagner's deed for mankind, thereby promoting the greatness of Bayreuth in an effort to ensure its rightful place in history. Fearing that the necessary elements will not be brought together at Bayreuth, Nietzsche takes it upon himself to conquer fortune. At the birth of the Bayreuth festival, a festival still 'young and pliable,' Nietzsche grasps it in his hands and shapes it, embedding upon it his own stamp. As the ancient Greeks elevated their poets, Nietzsche simultaneously elevates and recreates Wagner and his art, thus creating a Wagner worthy of his own ideal. Having done so, an idealised festival is presented to the world for all to behold and to strive to achieve. Through his essay, Nietzsche attempts to realise the great potential of this event, to make a strong impression on man, and to stimulate a new, genuine German culture: Nietzsche himself sets out to accomplish a great deed.

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[7] In providing criteria by which to judge historical accounts in *The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, Nietzsche argues that like can only be understood by like (6). Nietzsche gives demonstration to this principle in his discussion of the "formula for *Shakespeare*," found in 'Why I am so Clever,' *Ecce Homo*, 4. If like can only be understood by like, then in order to understand the greatest spectator, Nietzsche must be the important spectator. This has further significance, suggesting that there is an important and relevant likeness between Wagner and Nietzsche.

Nietzsche took two-fold action in his attempt that this idea would be realised. First, Nietzsche published his essay before the inauguration of the festival in an effort to alter people's understanding of, and to shape their reactions to the festival. Nietzsche himself never stated as much, however, he was aware that "it has been the proper task of all great thinkers to be lawgivers as to the measure, stamp and weight of things."[8] Second, in the case that the festival still failed, Nietzsche captured his ideal in *Wagner in Bayreuth*, thereby preserving it for a more worthy time.[9] With this aim in mind—namely, bringing the idea to fruition—Nietzsche turns to a closer examination of the events at Bayreuth and its potential significance.

As Nietzsche has already expressed, ostensibly the significance of Bayreuth lies in the presentation of Wagner's art as the composer envisioned it. From the privileged perspective of the philosopher, however, one learns that there is a greater cultural importance embodied in the event at Bayreuth. For example, the festival is especially significant for the "uncommon degree of sharpness and tension between opposites." One opposition is between the different types of spectators. On the one hand, there are those who "are slow and demand slowness in others." These men are evolutionists: they cannot grasp how a "single individual could, in the course of an average human lifespan, produce something altogether new." Thus, they "cleave to the gradualness of all evolution as though to a kind of moral law." Consequently, humanity is held back. On the other hand, there is Wagner and men like him who move fast. Men such as these push mankind to make great leaps:

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[8] Nietzsche, *SE*, 3. It is argued by some that Nietzsche's decision to publish *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* rested on his desire for a best-selling book. Schaberg puts forth the argument that the publication of the fourth *Untimely Meditation* was made to coincide with the festival in order to capitalise on the subject matter (48-49). Schaberg's argument, however, fails to consider to alternative reasons (reasons other than fame and fortune) for why a philosopher may choose to publish a book.

[9] In light of Nietzsche's role vis-à-vis the festival, perhaps his essay may be more suitably titled *Nietzsche in Bayreuth*. Likewise, *Schopenhauer as Educator* might more aptly be titled *Nietzsche as Educator*, as he himself testifies in "Why I Write Such Good Books: 'The Untimely Ones,'" *EH*, 3.

> For such an undertaking as that at Bayreuth there were no warning signs, no transitional events, nothing intermediate; the long path to the goal, and the goal itself, none knew but Wagner (1/3).

Stemming from their lack of understanding, the evolutionists are indignant and lash out against Wagner in an attempt to bring him down to their level.[10]

Another pair of conflicting opposites is the established arts of modernity and Wagner's art. Nietzsche describes the former as "isolated and stunted or as luxury arts." As such, the arts of modernity—and art as such—have "been almost disvalued." The degeneration of art in modernity reflects back on the men of modernity: lacking excellence themselves, they have failed to inspire great art. Conscious of this, they have attempted to reach back in time, seeking great art amongst the ancient Greeks. Yet, lacking greatness in themselves, this too has failed: the moderns have been left with only

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[10] Similarly, Nietzsche is misunderstood because he moves at a different pace:

> It is hard to be understood, especially when one thinks and lives gāngāsrotagati [as the current of the Ganges moves] among men who think and live differently—namely, kūrmagati [as the tortoise moves], or at best 'the way frogs walk,' mandūkagati (I obviously do everything to be 'hard to understand' myself!)....

Nietzsche, *BGE*, 27.

See Kaufmann's notes on the translation of these Sanskrit words and the crucial problem of Nietzsche's tempo with respect to his reception as a philosopher. In this regard, also see Lampert's discussion of aphorism 27 in his book, *Nietzsche's Task: an interpretation of 'Beyond Good and Evil,'* 66-68.

"uncertain, ill coordinated recollections of a true art." However, with the Bayreuth festival, Wagner surpassed the limitations of modernity, not only discovering "a new art"—one neither modern nor Greek—"but art itself." Wagner's accomplishment is "the first circumnavigation of the world in the domain of art" (1/3). Considering the immeasurable significance of the first circumnavigation of the globe sheds light on the weight of Nietzsche's statement.

By the time Ferdinand Magellan set off to sail around the globe in 1519, Christopher Columbus had already discovered the Americas, dramatically increasing people's conceptions of the size of the world. Yet, Magellan's trip, begun by him and completed by Juan Sebastián del Cano, is no less important. The first trip around the world opened up endless possibilities of what the world contained and what was achievable by man. Further, the globe as a three-dimensional sphere gave man a more complete perspective of his home. Similarly, Wagner, following the musical accomplishments of the festival at Bayreuth, revealed the full natural 'world' of art; by encompassing all the arts, uniting them as a whole, and illuminating art from all sides, he enabled us to see art in its completeness. Resultantly, innumerable possibilities in the realm of art have been exposed, opening the way for a revival of art, and with it, of culture. Thus, the Bayreuth festival marks a pivotal moment in history:

> For many things the time has come to die out; this new art is a prophet which sees the end approaching for other things than the arts. Its admonishing hand must make a very disquieting impression upon our entire contemporary culture as soon as the laughter provoked by parodies of it has subsided: let the merriment go on for a little while yet! (1/3)

While the many are laughing and enjoying the last days of the old cultural regime, Nietzsche, like John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus, is preparing the way for this new art and all its consequent effects.

v. Readers as Spectators

From the standpoint of a future time, looking back on the Bayreuth festival through Nietzsche's illuminating vision one can understand more fully the deeper significance of the festival. In this way, the reader too becomes a traveler who, with the guidance of the philosopher, moves back in time, contemplating great cultural events. Reading Nietzsche's account, one does not contemplate the historical Bayreuth festival, but Nietzsche's idealisation of the festival. It is Nietzsche's conception of Bayreuth that he passes down to future generations as an example of genuine art and culture. For Nietzsche's idealised Bayreuth to make an impact, he too must ensure he has a worthy audience; otherwise, Nietzsche's thought will not make an impression on mankind and so be blown away by the winds of history. Nietzsche, *the* "man of force," takes measures to prevent such an outcome. To make his idea of Bayreuth the great cultural success it could be, Nietzsche needs apostles. Thus, Nietzsche incites "we disciples of art resurrected"—the fortunate beneficiaries of Wagner's art—to follow him (1/4). Nietzsche is not seeking disciples simply; he is careful to select worthy ones. In order to do so, he employs the philosopher's ageless art of esotericism. Like his great predecessors, Nietzsche recognises both the advantages and disadvantages of writing.

Unlike a private conversation, a published work is accessible to anyone.[11] To meet this challenge, philosophers throughout the Western philosophic tradition have employed esotericism.[12] What is presented in written form is an exoteric teaching accessible to all readers, and a deeper teaching for a more select readership. As Leo Strauss describes with respect to Platonic dialogues,

> [esoteric writing] is a kind of writing which is free from the essential defect of writings. Writings are essentially defective because they are equally accessible to all who can read or because they do not know to whom to talk and to whom to be silent or because they say the same things to everyone. We may conclude that the Platonic dialogue says different things to different people—not accidentally, as every writing does, but that it is so contrived as to say different things to different people, or that it is radically ironical...The proper work of a writing is to talk to some readers and to be silent to others.[13]

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[11] This issue is especially pertinent to *Wagner in Bayreuth*, as Wagner was both a friend of Nietzsche's and alive at the time of the essay's publication (unlike in the case of Schopenhauer, who was deceased, and Strauss, who had no personal affiliation with Nietzsche). In his introduction to the *Untimely Meditations*, Breazeale discusses Nietzsche's dilemma:

> Wagner in Bayreuth [was] written at a point in [Nietzsche's] life when he had already formulated (albeit only privately) the basic elements of the devastating critique of Wagner as a 'histrionic romantic' that he would make public only many years later...Wagner was not only very much alive, but was also extremely sensitive to any appearance of criticism or disloyalty on the part of his friends and allies...The problem was how to write a book, intended for the public, in which he could express his admiration without violating his intellectual integrity.

Breazeale goes on to expound Nietzsche's strategy for dealing with this dilemma:

> to use Wagner's own words against Wagner himself. By quoting copiously from his writings, Nietzsche would erect a certain (Wagnerian) ideal of art and of culture, an ideal to which he could still subscribe at least in part. It would then be left up to the readers to determine for themselves—assisted, perhaps, by a few discreet suggestions from the author—how far short Wagner's actual achievement was from this ideal. (xxii)

[12] Nietzsche argues this in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

> Our highest insights must—and should—sound like follies and sometimes like crimes when they are heard without permission by those who are not predisposed and predestined for them. The difference between the exoteric and the esoteric, formerly known to philosophers.... (30)

Cf. Nietzsche, *BGE*, 40.

[13] Leo Strauss, *The City and Man*, 53.

Not only does Nietzsche mean to exclude those unworthy of his deeper insights, he uses esotericism to promote philosophical activity in those suitable readers. In this way, Nietzsche does not forcibly choose his readers. Rather, he throws lures and obstacles in the path of his reader and leaves it up for our self-selection.[14]

To pass through his selection process, Nietzsche demands his readers be tough, disciplined, and hard-working. As with all of Nietzsche's writings, one requires a strong stomach and a robust constitution to digest his thoughts. At the beginning of ***Wagner in Bayreuth***, Nietzsche presents clues as to what is necessary for one to follow him. Primarily, both time and will are required. Most people exclude themselves from Nietzsche's chosen few because they are too busy with the day to day activities of living; hence they hurry through life and do not pause to consider fundamental questions regarding art, culture, human existence, and such. Alternately, those who do pause and think may lack the mental strength and determination to consider these questions through to the bottom. Questioning the shallowness and insincerity of contemporary 'thinking about art,' Nietzsche concludes that what has hitherto transpired is "noise and chatter" (1/4). This assessment is particularly relevant to how Wagner's art was received. Up until the time in which Nietzsche was writing this essay (and arguably still today), Wagner had been especially susceptible to such chattering amongst scholars, critics, and newspapermen, all of whom failed to understand the significance of Wagner's art. In response to Wagner's art there was only "twittering about the new art-works as though they had been created for the express purpose of being talked to pieces" (8/4).[15] Now, however, with the advent of the festival at Bayreuth, things are different. Henceforth, Nietzsche explains, "we are bound to find [such noise and chatter] shamelessly importunate" (1/4). Nietzsche's chosen readers will give time and substantial thought to the important questions raised in this essay and rise above trivial chatter. Finally, many will exclude themselves from Nietzsche's chosen few by disregarding Nietzsche outright; in light of the 'real concerns' of politics, they view art as trivial. Nietzsche means to exclude such readers, those who:

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[14] Nietzsche described his *Untimely Meditations* as fish hooks cast out to attract readers and capture their attention. Breazeale, 'Introduction,' *Untimely Meditations*, xxiv.

Cf. Nietzsche, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'Beyond Good and Evil,'' *EH*: "From this moment forward all my writings are fish hooks: perhaps I know how to fish as well as anyone?" (1).

> will find it offensive that an aesthetic problem should be taken so seriously—assuming they are unable to consider art more than a pleasant sideline, a readily dispensable tinkling of bells that accompanies the 'seriousness of life,' just as if nobody knew what was involved in such a contrast with the 'seriousness of life.'[16]

In his 'first-born,' Nietzsche already provided his response to these skeptics: "I am convinced that art represents the highest task and the truly metaphysical activity of this life." Those who likewise sense the importance of art will take Nietzsche's discussion seriously—he will not dispense his energies convincing those who do not.

Nietzsche identifies two further qualities of great import to his readers: silence and work. One must distance oneself from the incessant chattering of the moderns by practicing the art of silence; silence is necessary to cleanse oneself of the prejudices and assumptions of modernity, and to turn inward and confront who one is. In *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Nietzsche describes how such moments of quiet contemplation are difficult for modern men:

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[15] In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche addresses the effects of this phenomenon on art:

> While the critic got the upper hand in the theatre and concert hall, the journalist in the schools, and the press in society, art degenerated into a particularly lowly topic of conversation, and aesthetic criticism was used as a means of uniting a vain, distracted, selfish, and moreover piteously unoriginal sociability whose character is suggested by Schopenhauer's parable of the porcupines. As a result, art has never been so much talked about and so little esteemed. But is it still possible to have intercourse with a person capable of conversing about Beethoven or Shakespeare? Let each answer this question according to his own feelings: he will at any rate show by his answer his conception of 'culture,' provided he at least tries to answer the question, and has not already become dumfounded with astonishment. (22)

[16] Nietzsche, 'Preface to Richard Wagner,' *BT*.

> we live in fear of memory and of turning inward. But what is it that assails us so frequently, what is the gnat that will not let us sleep? There are spirits all around us, every moment of our life wants to say something to us, but we refuse to listen to these spirit voices. We are afraid that when we are alone and quiet something will be whispered into our ear, and so we hate quietness and deafen ourselves with sociability.

The 'deafness' of modern man is contrasted with Schopenhauer, who heard much of "the great *enlightenment* as to the character of existence" quietly uttered by nature. To participate in this enlightenment, one needs "open ears."[17] For those of us who lack the ability to understand on our own that which nature quietly reveals, silence is still important. Only with silence can we hear the single voice previously drowned out by the masses: the voice of one who interprets nature for us—the voice of the philosopher.

Having managed to find a quiet solitude, one must work to engage Nietzsche in dialogue. One cannot read Nietzsche passively, but must actively exert oneself. Nietzsche's style of writing is terse—he himself practices "the art of *silence*."[18] In this regard, Laurence Lampert describes the style of Nietzsche's esotericism:

> Its art of writing trains by temptation, allowing the essential matters to be almost overheard in what is actually said. Almost overhearing induces the reader to strain to actually hear, to recompose the thoughts composed in Nietzsche's mind and made available in the only way likely to persuade, an enchanting way that draws the enchanted reader into assembling the thoughts on

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[17] Nietzsche, *SE*, 5.

[18] Nietzsche describing the style of *Beyond Good and Evil* in "Why I Write Such Good Books: Beyond Good and Evil," *EH*, 2.

> his own, making them his own, owning them as they own him in a mutual act of owning.[19]

In his early publications, Nietzsche had not yet fully developed his mature, terse, aphoristic style of writing. Thus, the *Untimely Meditations* are in many ways the most accessible of Nietzsche's writings. Yet, one must be wary of being swept along in the argument by Nietzsche's rhetoric and the seeming flow of his arguments. With this in mind, Nietzsche proffers a warning:

> As regards 'the good friends,' however, who are always too lazy and think that as friends they have a right to relax, one does well to grant them from the outset some leeway and romping place for misunderstanding: then one can even laugh—or get rid of them altogether, these good friends—and also laugh.[20]

In reading Nietzsche, one must never take him for granted.

Returning to Nietzsche's great deed in Bayreuth, in order for Nietzsche to be successful, it is necessary that his readers undergo a secular version of Biblical redemption through purification. Nietzsche—the savior of art—condemns each man of modernity for having "dirtied his hands and heart in the service of the idols of modern culture." Not one of us, including Nietzsche, remains untouched by the effects of our degenerative culture. Having been nurtured by modern culture, we are in part its products. Therefore, we must work to overcome what is modern in us. As all followers of Christ must be baptised into a new life, Nietzsche's followers also need "the water of purification." This requires that we squarely and honestly confront Nietzsche's assessment of our condition, as uncomfortable as his analysis may be, and consider in all seriousness the remedy he prescribes. To begin, one must be willing to sacrifice the

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[19] Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task*, 4.

[20] Nietzsche, *BGE*, 27.

'sacred cows' of modernity. This is necessary if one desires truly to understand the significance of Bayreuth. Nietzsche declares that only those who follow the voice that admonishes—"be silent and be cleansed! be silent and be cleansed!"—will be "granted the *mighty insight* with which we have to view the event at Bayreuth." This is of the utmost importance, for "only in this insight does there lie the *mighty future* of that event" (1/4).

In order to understand the potential greatness of the festival at Bayreuth, Nietzsche emphasises that one must look at it from the perspective of the "Wagnerian inner view" (1/5). From Wagner's internal perspective, one can comprehend that Wagner has experienced: the important questions of how he came to be and what he is; his views of art and the modern world; and what he believed he would be to future generations. Nietzsche warns that only with Wagnerian insight can the potential greatness of the event at Bayreuth be understood and its greatness realised. At this point, an important literary question arises. In *Wagner in Bayreuth*, the reader does not get Wagner's view firsthand (as one does in Wagner's own writings); rather, one is the recipient of Nietzsche's view of Wagner's view. One encounters a similar problem with Platonic dialogues and Shakespearean plays. For example, the Socrates portrayed by Plato is not Socrates' own account of himself and his teachings. The Platonic Socrates, encountered by the reader in works such as the *Republic*, is a "beautified" version of the historical Socrates.[21] Similarly, in Shakespeare's accounts of historical characters, one does not encounter the likes of Julius Caesar as he saw himself, but Julius Caesar as Shakespeare interpreted the historical man. Interpreting Nietzsche once again, the reader of *Wagner in Bayreuth* is not the recipient of the 'inner Wagnerian view' simply, but the 'Nietzschean inner Wagnerian view' of Wagner in Bayreuth.

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[21] Plato's second letter: "There is no writing of Plato's, nor will there ever be; those that are now called so come from an idealized and youthful Socrates" (314c). In Plato, *Complete Works*, edited by John M. Cooper.

As readers of Nietzsche, we too become important spectators at Bayreuth. That the first festival was held in 1876 is irrelevant, for the greatness of this event reaches beyond its own time through Nietzsche's essay. That Wagner's operas are still performed at the same festival house on the same sight is also irrelevant, for there is no guarantee of greatness of spirit amongst those involved.[22] If the greatness of Bayreuth is to be finally realised, we must first understand its promise as understood by Nietzsche; it is necessary that we actively follow Nietzsche as he seeks the 'Wagnerian inner view.' Only having been educated by the greatest spectator of all shall we "be able to understand [Wagner's] great deed itself—*and with this understanding guarantee its fruitfulness*" (1/5).

Despite Nietzsche's promise, the tone is ominous. As on that day when the foundation stone of the festival house was laid in Bayreuth, we too set out "amid pouring rain and under a darkened sky." The sought after 'mighty insight' may prove dangerous: it is apocalyptic. Like the prophets of the Bible who foresaw the future, so too does the eye of Wagner as he "beheld within him on that day…how he became what he is and what he will be" (1/5). Piercing Wagner's 'inner view' involves a contemplation of art that is broader in scope than the historical 'Wagner in Bayreuth:' no aspect of our art, culture and lives will be left unexamined and unchallenged. Nietzsche, leading the reader on a radical reconsideration of modernity itself, is challenging one to action.[23] Before the 'art of the future,' spearheaded by Wagner's art, can reign over modern culture and the sun shine again, a battle must be fought. The enemy is the culture of today and those who promote it, the battlefield is the modern soul, and "Bayreuth signifies the morning consecration on the day of battle" (4/3). This is the beginning of Nietzsche's task, as well as ours.

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[22] This is especially true in light of Bayreuth's degeneration during the Nazi regime. Now, though saved from its nasty affair with anti-Semitism, the festival is no more promising. Festival organisers and attendees have lost sight of the reasons the festival was founded—as a necessary venue for the production of Wagner's art as he intended and the cornerstone of a new German culture—and certainly do not understand the significance of the festival as Nietzsche did. The Wagnerians and cultural philistines that Nietzsche so despised still abound in the apparel of the twenty-first century.

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[23] As he expresses in *Schopenhauer as Educator*: "I consider every word behind which there does not stand such a challenge to action to have been written in vain" (8).

CHAPTER THREE: SECTIONS 2 & 3

i. Overview: sections 2 & 3

In sections 2 and 3, Nietzsche embarks on his quest for the 'inner Wagnerian view,' turning to how Wagner came to be a master of the arts, and what he accomplished as a consequence. Upon careful consideration, Nietzsche's discussion consists of three different layers, allowing for three levels of meaning and interpretation. On the surface, Nietzsche's argument is rhetorical, serving to embellish and cosmetise Wagner's life. More substantially, however, it is an analysis of 'the case of Wagner.' As such, it is a lesson on the dangers and challenges facing great men of action in modernity—particularly true artists—and, in turn, what is required of these great men to overcome these challenges and realise their potential, thus becoming truly great. An immortalised Wagner, as created by Nietzsche, serves as an inspiring example: one learns "that the greatness that once existed was in any event once *possible* and may thus be possible again."[1] At the deepest level, as "in all psychologically decisive places" of the essay, Nietzsche's discussion pertains to himself; he points to the trajectory of his own development and his future task as philosopher.[2] While sections 2 and 3 are self-reflexive, it is not as simple as equating Nietzsche with Wagner.[3] Nevertheless,

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[1] Nietzsche, *UD*, 2.

[2] Nietzsche, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'The Birth of Tragedy,'' *EH*, 4.

[3] In the fourth section of his discussion on 'The Birth of Tragedy' in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche discusses *Wagner in Bayreuth*. Here Nietzsche suggests that it *is* as simple as replacing Wagner's name with his: "I alone am discussed—and one need not hesitate to put down my name of the word 'Zarathustra' where the text has the word 'Wagner.'" However, one can only make this replacement in those "psychologically decisive places." Identifying these places becomes the task.

Nietzsche's discussion of Wagner provides insight into his own soul and his view of philosophy.

ii. The 'case of Wagner'

Nietzsche's rhetoric is directed at an audience unconvinced of Wagner's greatness. Although Wagner's reputation had increased in recent years, catapulting him to the top of the music world, he remained professionally and personally controversial. Professionally, a fierce debate centered on Wagner's revolutionary music, polarizing the music world. Those who disliked Wagner preferred to support a more traditional composer such as Johannes Brahms. Personally, Wagner was renowned for the scandals that followed him. Youthful political activities in the Dresden uprising of 1848 forced him to flee to Switzerland, where he lived in exile for many years. Following artistic or monetary opportunities, Wagner traveled through Europe, spending time in London, Paris, Vienna, and Venice. Such opportunities generally turned to failure, either due to external factors or Wagner's own antics. Living in poverty for much of his artistic life, when given the opportunity (through patronage or credit), Wagner lived luxuriously beyond his means, leaving him in ever mounting debt and forcing him to flee on more than one occasion. He was also a shameless womaniser, often involving the wives of his patrons. In the words of Magee, "[h]e loved many women, and more women loved him."[4] Most famous of all was his affair with Cosima, the illegitimate daughter of the composer Franz Liszt, and, at the time, the wife of conductor Hans von Bülow. Wagner eventually married her

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[4] Magee, *The Tristan Chord*, 13.

(this was his second marriage; his first was to actress Minna Planer), but not before scandal forced them out of Munich. On more than one occasion Wagner's personal activities threatened his professional career. Taking this into account, Gutman observes:

> In many ways Wagner's life was a heroic struggle to impose his art on an indifferent and often reluctant world. Yet he frequently spent his energies surmounting obstacles he himself had willingly placed in his own path.[5]

Wagner would not have agreed with the later half of Gutman's assessment. Holding himself in the utmost regard, Wagner believed that the world owed him everything for his art; anything less he saw as betrayal and deceit, any trouble or obstacles he blamed on others.

Wagner was infamous for his arrogance, rashness, and domineering character. As Camille Saint-Saëns—a composer contemporaneous to Wagner—observed, "Wagner's lack of discretion was equaled only by his genius."[6] The state of Wagner's psychological health was publicly attacked by men claiming professional expertise. One such study "claimed that Wagner was insane and cited many symptoms of megalomania."[7] In the fall of 1872, physician and psychiatrist Theodor Puschmann published *Richard Wagner,*

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[5] Gutman, 216. Despite the success of his operas, Wagner's politics and character continue to haunt him today, albeit in different terms. In *The Tristan Chord*, Magee sums up how the composer is by and large viewed today: "He is thought of as quintessentially right-wing, a pillar of the German establishment, jingoistically nationalistic, a racialist and an anti-Semite, a sort of proto-Nazi" (68). Like Nietzsche, Magee tries to redeem Wagner, explaining that these are anachronistic assumptions on our part. He concludes:

> If we are at all serious about wanting to understand Wagner we must remember that all these violent emotions of his that are so deeply repulsive to us now…had foundations that, in his mind, were predominantly cultural…What mattered to him overwhelmingly were art and music, and he held his attitudes chiefly with regard to these. (71-72)

[6] Gutman, 309.

[7] Schaberg, 29.

a Psychiatric Study, "in which he declared that Wagner was mad."[8] Seen in that light, it is difficult to consider Wagner's art as the work of a genius and cultural master, as opposed to the effusions of a madman. Needless to say, if Wagner was indeed mad, he need not be taken seriously. Hence, before presenting any convincing evidence of Wagner's greatness, Nietzsche must confront and refute this view of Wagner. Thus, in sections 2 and 3 of ***Wagner in Bayreuth***, Nietzsche repaints Wagner's questionable past in a new and forgiving light. Treating Wagner's reputation as an unfortunate misunderstanding, Nietzsche leads the reader to distinguish between the external appearances of Wagner's nature and Wagner's true self. The effect is to render the reader more compassionate and understanding of Wagner's idiosyncratic foibles. This is important in preparing the reader for a serious consideration of Wagner's art. Having thus provided new standards with which a reader can re-evaluate Wagner, Nietzsche concedes the impropriety of Wagner's past, and then invites his reader to reflect on the following:

> How the feeling and recognition that whole stretches of [Wagner's] life are marked by a grotesque lack of dignity must affect an artist who, more than any other, can breathe freely only in the sublime and more than sublime (3/1).

By extenuating, if not beautifying Wagner's 'indiscretions,' Nietzsche inhibits his reader from too readily condemning the composer for his all-too-human past. As opposed to being either insane or grossly immoral, Wagner becomes the innocent victim of the corrupting and denigrating effects of 'bad air.'

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[8] Ibid., 30. Nietzsche publicly defended Wagner against these attacks in an open letter entitled "A New Year's Word for the Editor of the Weekly Paper '*In the New Reich*,'" which appeared the *Musical Weekly*, 3 January 1873.

Nietzsche's metaphorical use of 'bad air' points to an external factor affecting Wagner: the depraved atmosphere of the modern cave that threatens to corrupt or extinguish all potential greatness. This metaphor relates to the agricultural conception of culture. As a plant requires clean, fresh air to thrive, man needs a pure, inspiring atmosphere in order to grow into his perfect form and develop his genius. It is the role of culture to ensure that men, like plants, are cultivated in a suitable environment. Elsewhere Nietzsche contrasts the effects of pure alpine air to musty, subterranean air; the former elevates and transforms, allowing one to reach new heights; the latter corrupts and suffocates.[9] The true artist requires the purest, highest, and most inspiring air in order to thrive and create genuine art. Modernity, however, lacks such an atmosphere.

Contributing to the 'bad air' of modernity are the "traps and fetters" of our cave—the honour, power, peace, and contentment it offers (3/1). These offerings, held out by the masses and their leaders, threaten true genius; such offerings do not recognise and reward true artistry, rather they celebrate those who satisfy the vulgar desires of the many. In modern times, it is the "dancing mob" which "possesses even the privilege of determining what is 'good taste.'"[10] As discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis, the influence of the "dancing mob" is the perennial dilemma of the dramatist. Yet, the air is not always bad—some eras provide both fertile ground and a sublime atmosphere (plenty of 'sun' and 'clean air') within which true artists can thrive. The age of tragic drama in ancient Greece was one such era. In modern times, however, decaying culture exudes "choking foul air" (3/1). It is testimony to Wagner's strength of character that, in spite of the dangers and temptations of modernity, he stayed true to himself and his ideals. Thus, Wagner's image as presented by Nietzsche serves to express "an unequaled problem of education, a new concept of self-discipline, self-defence to the point of hardness, a way to greatness and world-historical tasks."[11] Nietzsche's Wagner is the model of what is necessary for a man to overcome modern times and create true art.[12]

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[9] Nietzsche frequently associates his philosophy with this higher, purer air. In his 'Preface' to *Ecce Homo* he states:

> Those who can breathe the air of my writings know that it is an air of the heights, a *strong* air. One must be made for it. Otherwise there is no small danger that one may catch cold in it. The ice is near, the solitude tremendous—but how calmly all things lie in the light! How freely one breathes! How much one feels beneath oneself! (3)

On the other hand, Nietzsche associates modern culture (especially the festival at Bayreuth in its degenerate form) with musty, suffocating air. He makes this distinction in his description of Heinrich von Stein on a visit to Sils Maria in 'Why I am so Wise,' *Ecce Homo*:

> This excellent human being, who had walked into the Wagnerian morass with all the impetuous simplicity of a Prussian Junker (and in addition even into that of Dühring!), acted during these three days like one transformed by a tempest of freedom, like one who has suddenly been lifted to his own height and acquired wings. I always said to him that this was due to the good air up here, that this happened to everybody, that one was not for nothing six thousand feet above Bayreuth—but he would no believe me. (4)

Wagner as a model brings one to the second layer of sections 2 and 3: Nietzsche's general teaching on great men of action, particularly in modern times. Here, Nietzsche provides the reader with the tools to understand Wagner's coming into being as a great composer, and presents the 'good and evil' in modernity with which Wagner was confronted. Through a powerful and moving portrait of Wagner's soul, Nietzsche provides a penetrating psychological analysis of Wagner's development, from his childhood and youth, through to his maturity and the realization of his true self. Only with an understanding akin to Nietzsche's can one appreciate what motivated Wagner to create the art he did, the challenges and dangers that he faced (both those unique to his person and those intrinsic to the modern world), what was necessary for him to be able to overcome these obstacles, his remarkable accomplishments, and, in the end, the rarity of such a man. Yet, in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche asserts that his fourth 'untimely one' does *not* "contribute much to the understanding of, or even to the formulation of the proper psychological questions about" Wagner.[13] Nietzsche's statement in *Ecce Homo*, meant to clarify his task in *Wagner in Bayreuth*, draws the reader's attention to the larger issue at hand. In these two sections, Nietzsche is not presenting a scientific psychological study of 'the case of Wagner.' Rather, Nietzsche paints a portrait of a 'young and beautified' Wagner. Like an historical account that strays from the facts to capture the deeper truth and significance of an event, Nietzsche's account of Wagner disregards biographical exactness to present the image of the *type* of man necessary to create genuine art. In short, Nietzsche's account of Wagner points to larger questions than the psyche of one man; it addresses the perennial problem of the coming into being of a man of artistic genius and the modern obstacles that endanger his realization.[14] Nietzsche identifies and emphasises one such problem: loyalty. For Wagner to be "whole and wholly himself," and thus realise his perfection and achieve all that he was capable, it was necessary that he remained loyal to his task and resist the temptations of modernity (3/1).[15] Yet, Nietzsche points to an even deeper problem pertaining to loyalty—one embedded deep within Wagner's psyche.

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[10] Nietzsche, *UD*, 2.

[11] Nietzsche, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'The Untimely Ones,'' *EH*, 3. In a similar vein, Nietzsche wrote to Rohde (9 December 1868): "Think of Schopenhauer and Richard Wagner, of their inexhaustible energy which kept their faith in themselves intact despite the jeering of the whole 'culture' world." Quoted in Ronald Haymen, *Nietzsche: A Critical Life*, 41.

[12] This discussion of Wagner as a model is returned to in chapter 6 of this thesis.

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[13] Ibid.

[14] In *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Nietzsche has a parallel treatment of the coming into being of the philosopher, which begs to be compared to the coming into being of the artist in *Wagner in Bayreuth*. To understand Nietzsche, it is significant that he saw both these men—Schopenhauer the philosopher and Wagner the artist—as encompassed by his own self.

[15] Cf. Nietzsche, *BGE*, 92: "Who has not, for the sake of his good reputation—sacrificed himself once?—"

Nietzsche observes that when Wagner reached his spiritual and moral maturity, his "nature appear[ed] in a fearful way simplified, torn apart into two drives or spheres" (2/3). Wagner is thus, according to Nietzsche, characterised by a deeply divided soul. Wagner's two contrasting drives, as identified by Nietzsche, are in effect 'will to power' and 'spirit [*Geist*] of selfless love.'[16] Nietzsche's account of these two drives is an application of his account of the Dionysian and Apollonian, first laid out in *The Birth of Tragedy*, to Wagner's nature.[17] Wagner's 'will' is similar to the Dionysian. Nietzsche

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[16] On Hollingdale's translation of *Geist*, see chapter 2, note 2. There is a well known story that testifies to Wagner's strong will. Related by Gutman,

> In the course of 1874 [Wagner and Nietzsche] came close to an open break. Nietzsche, who had heard Brahms' *Song of Triumph* in the minster at Basel, took a copy of the score to Bayreuth and left it on Wagner's piano when he visited in August. Wagner reacted like a bull to a red cloth, later confessing to Elizabeth that he had surmised that her brother was saying symbolically, 'See here! Here is someone else who can also compose something worth while!' The suspicion was well founded. Wagner admitted, 'I let go of myself, and how I did rage!' Nietzsche, who didn't say a word, stared 'with a look of astonished dignity.' He was probing, testing, and discovering the full extent of Wagner's tyranny. (354)

Kaufman observes in his biography, *Nietzsche*, that Wagner provided the philosopher "a singular opportunity for a first-hand study of the will to power," and was "the starting point of Nietzsche's depth psychology and one of the decisive inspirations of his later conception of the will to power" (181, 31).

[17] Nietzsche's account of the Dionysian and the Apollonian is found in *The Birth of Tragedy*. He explains that they are analogous, yet opposing, artistic impulses rooted in nature. The Apollonian is borrowed from the figure of the god Apollo, the soothsaying god who rules over the "beautiful illusion of the inner world of fantasy." As a physiological phenomenon, the Apollonian is the "beautiful illusion of the dream worlds;" it is imagistic, providing beautiful illustrations of the world, which "is the prerequisite of all plastic art." Nietzsche associates it with strength, order, visibility, individuality, measure, restraint, plasticity, intelligibility, healing, stability, rest, sun-like, soothing, and illusion. The fruits of the Apollonian tendency—the plastic arts, including sculpture, painting and epic poetry—stand apart from the reality of existence as do dreams, and present images that perfect the state of man and "afford him an interpretation of life." The Apollonian represents our delight in the "joyous necessity of the dream experience," and "the joy and wisdom of 'illusion.'" Such appearances are necessary: the beauty of the Apollonian covers the terrible wisdom of Silenus, providing consolation in a world that is necessarily full of suffering. In the face of the "incompletely intelligible everyday world," Apollonian art heals and helps, as through sleep and dreams: "it is at the same time the symbolical analogue of the soothsaying faculty and of the arts generally, which make life possible and worth living" (1).

In great contrast to the Apollonian, the Dionysian tendency expresses itself in music, dance and lyric poetry—the nonimagistic arts. It is associated with ecstasy, motion, activity, self-abnegation, darkness, audibility, chaos, intensity, excess, unity, melody, community, animalistic, violence, and life-giving. Whereas dreaming is the physiological manifestation of the Apollonian, that of the Dionysian is intoxication—not only alcoholic intoxication, but intoxication with life. Deeply reflected by the Dionysian describes it as the "precipitate current of a vehement will" that rages below. With a tyrannical longing for power, it "strives to reach up to the light through every runway, cave and crevice." Bearing likeness to the Apollonian is Wagner's second sphere:

> a spirit [*Geist*] full of love, with voice overflowing with goodness and sweetness, with a hatred of violence and self-destruction, which desires to see no one in chains (2/3).

As in the case of the barbarians, where the absence of the moderating rule of the Apollonian allowed the Dionysian impulse to culminate in savage orgiastic festivals, without the guidance of a generous spirit, Wagner's will threatened to overwhelm his self and prevent him from creating his art. This is not to underestimate the important contributions of his will: without this powerful tyrannical drive, Wagner's spirit would have been unable to create the art he did. As the mysterious union of the Apollonian and the Dionysian was fundamental to the birth of tragic drama, the coupling of Wagner's two drives was necessary for the production of his art. However, it was not enough that these two drives simply be coupled: they had to be loyal to each other, lest one overtake the other. Wagner's art attests to, and celebrates this loyalty:

> that marvelous experience and recognition that one sphere of his being remains loyal to the other, shows loyalty out of free and

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are two features of human existence and the suffering they cause. The first is the suffering caused by individuation. Dionysus, who "experience[ed] in himself the agonies of individuation, of whom wonderful myths tell that as a boy he was torn to pieces by the Titans" represents the pain each person feels having been born into the world an individual, thus separated from the "primal unity" (10). The other feature of human existence is expressed in the wisdom of Silenus, which reveals the meaningless of life and the inevitability of suffering and injustice.

The development of art, Nietzsche argues, is bound up in the duality of the Dionysian and the Apollonian. Differing greatly in character, the Apollonian and the Dionysian are opposed to each other, resulting in perpetual strife between them. Their continual antagonism propels the creation of art: "just as procreation depends on the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual strife with only periodically intervening reconciliations." Normally, one dominates the other. However, they were at last reconciled "by a metaphysical miracle of the Hellenic 'will.'" At a moment in time in ancient Greece, "they appear coupled with each other, and through this coupling ultimately generate[d] an equally Dionysian and Apollonian form of art—Attic tragedy" (1).

> most selfless love, the creative, innocent, more illuminated sphere to the dark, intractable and tyrannical.

Citing numerous examples from Wagner's operas, Nietzsche argues that this loyalty is "the most personal primal event that Wagner experiences within himself and reveres like a religious mystery" (2/4). Not fully revealed here in the early sections of the essay, the nature and significance of the loyalty of Wagner's two spheres is made clearer as Nietzsche's discussion unfolds.

iii. The 'case of Nietzsche'

Loyalty, so emphasised in sections 2 and 3 with respect to Wagner, is also important for Nietzsche. On a superficial level, through *Wagner in Bayreuth* Nietzsche publicly demonstrates his loyalty to his friend. Yet, despite outward appearances, Nietzsche's notebooks, as well as parts of the fourth *Untimely Meditation*, testify to the philosopher's private doubts regarding Wagner and the struggles Nietzsche experienced regarding to their friendship. Nietzsche, too, was facing the need to be loyal to his self as he grew into his own as a philosopher: to be true to himself, could he remain loyal to his erstwhile friend? Thus, as a loyal act of friendship, the fourth 'untimely one' is (on the surface) a tribute to Wagner. At the same time, however, it has a deeper significance for Nietzsche: it bears witness to his struggle as he sought to find his independence as a philosopher and thereby fulfill his own promise.

Thus, one must reread sections 2 and 3 with Nietzsche's 'becoming' in mind. One example is Nietzsche's observation regarding the "dramatic element in Wagner's *development*" (2/2):

> It would be strange if that which a man can do best and most likes to do failed to become a visible presence within the total formation of his life; and in the case of men of exceptional abilities their life must become not only a reflection of their character, as is the case with everyone, but first and foremost a reflection of their intellect and of the capacities most personal to them.

From this principle, Nietzsche asserts that the "life of the epic poet will have something of the epic about it…and the life of the dramatist will take a dramatic course" (2/1). By extension, one can conclude that the life of the philosopher will take a philosophic course. What a 'philosophic course' might entail is not elucidated at the beginning of section 2; it is not until the conclusion of section 3 that Nietzsche provides some semblance of an answer. Nevertheless, Nietzsche is now embarking on this course, leaving his role as scholar and seeking his independence as philosopher.[18] In the time following the publication of this last *Untimely Meditation*, as Nietzsche grew into his true self, he experienced difficult and painful challenges similar to those experienced by Wagner. Having matured into his true self, Nietzsche set out to accomplish great deeds.[19] Therefore, not only is *Wagner in Bayreuth* important for its consideration of Wagner, and by an extension of the great artist *per se*, it also provides invaluable insight into Nietzsche's own soul, and marks an important step in his development.

Also to be gleaned from Nietzsche's discussion of Wagner here, at the end of section 3, is his view of philosophy and his reasons for why philosophers write books (such as in the present instance). This seems, in part, to point towards the 'philosophic course.' Having discussed Wagner's use of history and philosophy, Nietzsche proclaims, "One cannot stand out more clearly from the whole contemporary age than through the way one employs history and philosophy" (3/4). Nietzsche's extensive discussions of history and philosophy, in his second and third *Untimely Meditations* respectively, establish his own untimeliness in this regard. In the course of his discussion of Wagner in the fourth essay, Nietzsche concisely puts forth his views on the proper use of history and the appropriate task of philosophy, thus indicating his own task in the essay, while providing principles for interpreting this text.

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[18] In part this is evidenced by the fact that *Wagner in Bayreuth* is Nietzsche's last published work to bear his title as 'Professor of Classical Philosophy of the University of Basel.'

[19] Nietzsche's path was a very solitary and difficult one. To symbolise his suffering, as well as his role in transforming man's view of the world, he conjures up the image of the suffering Christ, with the title of his autobiography: *Ecce Homo*. 'Behold the man,' the words of Pontius Pilate presenting Jesus to the Jews demanding his death, also refers to a genre of painting depicting Christ wearing the crown of thorns. Like Christ, Nietzsche intends radically to change the world.

Nietzsche condemns modern philosophers and historians for their feeble passivity and contentment with "the way things are." History, Nietzsche argues, should not be limited to its present use—as a means of peaceful repose and affirmation of the status quo—but should serve life, providing material for revolution and reform. As such, it always should be written with an eye to the future. Philosophy, he argues, in pointed contrast to regnant views among modern scholars, "has to be written in a much more serious, much stricter manner, out of a mighty soul and in general no longer optimistically." As with history, philosophy has been used,

> to serve as an opiate for everything revolutionary and innovative…all most people want to learn from it is a rough—very rough!—understanding of the world, so as then to accommodate themselves to the world.

Whereas true philosophy, on Nietzsche's view, is inherently revolutionary. It does not sit idly by in quiet corners, but is tyrannical in its attempt to stamp its perception of the world and human existence on mankind. In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson (a thinker whom Nietzsche admired): "Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk."[20] On this philosophic question, Nietzsche temporarily leaves his Wagnerian subject and speaks in his own voice:

> To me…the most vital of questions for philosophy appears to be to what extent the character of the world is unalterable: so as, once this question has been answered, to set about *improving that part of it recognized as alterable* with the most ruthless courage.

Nietzsche's view of philosophy rests on lessons he learned from true philosophers of the past: they "themselves teach this lesson, through the fact that they have worked to improve the very much alterable judgments of mankind and have not kept their wisdom to themselves" (3/4).[21] Perhaps this is what the 'philosophic course' means. For a true philosopher, his thought will necessarily be a visible presence in how he lives and acts in the world. As Nietzsche describes in *Schopenhauer as Educator* (the title itself revealing of the philosophic course), a philosopher is profitable, and thus worthy of consideration, only insofar as he provides an example—not merely in his books, but in his outward life:

> in the way, that is, in which the philosophers of Greece taught, through their bearing, what they wore and ate, and their morals, rather than by what they said, let alone by what they wrote.[22]

Thus, directed by his intellect and ruling passion, the philosopher cannot be anything but the revolutionary educator of mankind.

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[20] Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Circles*, in *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson, 255-6. Later in his life, Nietzsche expressed this conception of the philosophy in words similar to those of Emerson:

> How I understand the philosopher—as a terrible explosive, endangering everything—how my concept of the philosopher is worlds removed from any concepts that would include even a Kant, not to speak of academic 'ruminants' and other professors of philosophy (3).

Nietzsche, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: The Untimely Ones,' *EH*.

[21] As Machiavelli teaches in *The Prince*, Nietzsche shows that he has learned from books and the examples of excellent men.

[22] Nietzsche, *SE*, 3.

Nietzsche's statements regarding philosophy are pregnant with implications. Of special interest to the discussion at hand is Nietzsche's subtle disclosure of his reason for writing *Wagner in Bayreuth.* Setting out on the path tread by his predecessors, Nietzsche is working to change judgments. The change he seeks is not related to the first festival at Bayreuth as such, but regards the potential significance of what is being attempted there: Nietzsche is working to change regnant opinions on what constitutes true art and culture. The fourth *Untimely Meditation* presents Nietzsche's view of the condition of modern culture, the inadequacies of the modern art, and modern man's need for tragic drama. His teaching is not innocuous, but is an attempt to incite a revolution in the realm of art, thus giving birth to a radically different culture. Not pausing for breath, in section 4 Nietzsche delves into the history of culture and mankind's need for art, showing us by example how history can serve life and how philosophy can recreate the world.

CHAPTER FOUR: SECTION 4

i. Overview: section 4

Having raised the "most vital of questions for philosophy" at the end of section 3—that concerning the alterability of the world—in section 4, Nietzsche sets aside his 'psychologizing' about Wagner and returns to important philosophic questions raised at the beginning of the essay: why does the philosopher see this music festival as an important and potentially great event; what is significant about the idea of the festival at Bayreuth? As discussed above, answers to such questions are found in the privileged insight of the Nietzschean Wagner. Beyond the great artistic accomplishments displayed at Bayreuth, the festival is culturally significant for mankind. Understanding this deeper significance requires situating the Bayreuth festival in history and, in light of the present condition of culture, recognizing its necessity. To observe Bayreuth from the perspective of the 'Wagnerian inner view,' the reader must follow Nietzsche through the next five sections as he tunnels deeper into the idea symbolised by Bayreuth.

Nietzsche begins section 4 considering the universal nature of human existence through an examination of the history and evolution of culture since the Greeks. Nietzsche, who condemns modern accounts of history as "disguised Christian theodicy," provides a truly revolutionary account of our past (3/4). From a perspective outside our cave, Nietzsche presents the family history of modern man, addressing where we came from, who we are now, and, in light of what aspects of our nature are alterable, where we might go. In particular, Nietzsche addresses the spiritual condition of modern man and the role of art in life. He concludes, in light of the nature of human existence and the spiritual challenges faced by modern man, the only hope for mankind lies in a "*retention of the sense for the tragic*" (4/4). Within this context, Wagner and Bayreuth are reintroduced: Wagner is now commended as a "*counter-Alexander*," while the importance of Bayreuth is acknowledged to lie in the tragic art-work performed at the festival (4/1). Many issues thread through this discussion, weaving a picture of the deeper significance of the festival at Bayreuth. One such thread clearly stands out: the battle cry that sounds from Bayreuth, initiating the war against modern art and culture. This is especially prominent in the later half of section 4, which is liberally seasoned with martial language (e.g. allies, fight, enemy, defeat, weapon, enmity, malice, conquest, victory, bloodletting, struggle, battle, courage). Bayreuth, Nietzsche declares, is "the morning consecration on the day of battle" (4/3).

ii. Alexander: the last great event

The beginning of section 4 parallels the beginning of the essay: as in section 1, here Nietzsche speaks with a "world-historical accent."[1] Still with one eye on Bayreuth, he takes a step back to gain a synoptic view of the world and consider more general phenomena. From a perspective that stands outside of time, Nietzsche peers down from above, seeing likeness in events and circumstances widely separated by history, arguing that time acts as "a cloud" obscuring one's ability to see such likeness (4/1). From this omnipresent viewpoint, he provides a concentrated account of the evolution of culture, discussing only what he finds fundamental to understanding modern man. In doing so, Nietzsche situates modern man in history—setting us in a philosophically relevant context, so to speak. This is necessary to understand who we are, for modern man did not appear upon the world stage of his own independent will and volition: he is the progeny of earlier generations; the heir of a rich history, which Nietzsche traces back to ancient Greece.

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[1] Nietzsche, "Why I Write Such Good Books: 'Birth of Tragedy,'" *EH*, 4.

Nietzsche's account of history is contrary to the modern belief in progress championed by Hegel. Openly challenging this dominant view, Nietzsche argues, with respect to culture, any 'progress' has been minimal. In other words, while a lot of time has passed, the distance covered has been 'short.' In fact, it may be that the culture of our predecessors was both more genuine and more robust than that of modernity. Looking at the evolution of culture, Nietzsche remarks, if one "takes into account the actual distance covered and ignores the halts, regressions, hesitations and lingerings," Western culture has not advanced significantly past its origins in Greek civilization (4/1). Nietzsche does not measure 'advancement' or 'evolution' against the millions of happenings that make up the bulk of human history: his eye travels through time, searching for those events that have profoundly shaped man and influenced how he experiences his world. Stripping away all that is inconsequential from cultural history—thus, from history as such—Nietzsche presents only those events that are essential to understanding who we are.[2] As it happens, Nietzsche sees only one such fundamental event: the Hellenisation of the world. Achieving this was the two-fold task of Alexander the Great. This event, Nietzsche claims, is the pivotal moment in cultural history, its significance bearing on the whole of Western culture. Doubtless we are meant to regard this as a puzzling claim, made even more so by Nietzsche's brief account of it, which raises more questions than it answers. What in Alexander's deed is of such fundamental importance to cultural history? And why does Nietzsche claim that this is the *last* great event?

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[2] This is to follow the Delphic Oracle's command to 'know thyself.' In *Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, Nietzsche argues such knowledge is necessary to be truly human—or to have a genuine culture—and not to be "merely aggregates of humanlike qualities" (10).

To understand Nietzsche's claim regarding Alexander's deed, it is important to remember that Nietzsche's definition of a great event in section 1 allows for thoughts to be the greatest events in history and for thinkers to be the greatest actors.[3] On Nietzsche's view, philosophy is what matters most: mankind lives within the realm of interpretation, therefore thought *is* action, for it is through thought that our horizons are established, thus forming the framework within which we understand, and accordingly act in the world.[4] Through thought, man simultaneously interprets and creates his lived-in world. Man needs horizons in order to be strong, healthy, and fruitful, for very few have the strength and power to face a boundless existence. This horizon-creating has traditionally been the function of religion. It establishes an interpretation of the world and binds man within an eternal world. Thus, while himself an atheist, Nietzsche does not shun religion *per se*. To the contrary, he holds that man is by nature religious, and that for man to live healthily, philosophy must address this aspect of our nature. Without horizons, man is confronted with the dark abyss of a meaningless existence, and senses the worthlessness of all that has occurred and will occur; without an intelligible sense of the bounds of what *is*, man is lost in the sea of becoming:

> such a man would no longer believe in his own being, would no longer believe in himself, would see everything flowing asunder

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[3] In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche simply states, "the greatest thoughts are the greatest events" (285).

[4] Nietzsche's notion that people have to live in closed boundaries or horizons is the Nietzschean analogue of the cave. It applies to individuals, people, and entire cultures.

> in moving points and would lose himself in this stream of becoming.[5]

Horizons bestow upon life a character of coherence and permanence, lending stability and a sense of the eternal to man, thus giving meaning and purpose to life. Horizons explain phenomena that are otherwise unintelligible, providing us with a basic set of assumptions that we must believe in order to act day to day.

Looking again to Emerson helps elucidate Nietzsche's teaching on ideas. Emerson argues ideas are of primary importance to understanding mankind, for it is our ideas that influence every aspect of our lives, even shaping our view of the most mundane. In short, we are the product of the reigning ideas of our time:

> history and the state of the world [are] at any one time directly dependent on the intellectual classification then existing in the minds of men. The things which are dear to men at this hour are so on account of the ideas which have emerged on their mental horizons, and which cause the present order of things, as a tree bears its apples.[6]

A different culture, with different myths and a different conception of the world, would have a different interpretation of existence and stamp different weights of importance on things. Thus, Emerson concludes, "[a] new degree of culture would instantly revolutionize the entire system of human pursuits." This, in part, explains the diversity found in human life. That different cultures have different horizons does not deny, however, a transcendental reality outside of these horizons.[7] To the contrary, reality itself does not differ; rather, people differ in how they react to, and deal with, this reality.

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[5] Nietzsche, *UD*, 1.

[6] Emerson, *Circles*, 256.

[7] The relativist argument, which denies a reality outside of man's horizons, is articulated in Peter Winch's book *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*. Winch argues that each society has its own set of rules and all acts within that society are bound in these rules. Therefore, to understand an action

On Nietzsche's view, the philosopher forms the ruling ideas and determines the value of all things.[8] By virtue of his wisdom, his synoptic view of the whole of reality, and his understanding of human nature, the philosopher provides man with an interpretation of the world within which he lives and acts, binding mankind within the horizons the philosopher establishes. Nietzsche understands philosophy to be a creative

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we must understand the web of actions within which it is situated—we cannot understand an action or some sort of social phenomenon in isolation. Winch concludes that we cannot understand a society by studying it from the outside—one must understand its rules from the inside.

While Winch's account has some elements of truth and thus tempts its acceptance, his theory has some radically relativistic conclusions of which one must be cautious. Winch argues that each language game forms a cave and that there is nothing outside of a particular cave except for more caves. He therefore asserts that there are no common or transcendental elements shared by various societies, only shared features or "family resemblances." Thus, there can be no cross-cultural basis by which to compare or evaluate practices or rules of societies. It follows that there can be no transcendental criteria or standards by means of which to make universal generalisations or to evaluate the rules of other societies:

> since ideas and theories are constantly developing and changing, and since each system of ideas, its component elements being interrelated internally, has to be understood in and for itself; the combined result of which is to make systems of ideas a very unsuitable subject for broad generalizations...social relations really exist only in and through the ideas which are current in society; or alternatively; that social relations fall into the same logical category as do relations between ideas. It follows that social relations must be an equally unsuitable subject for generalizations and theories of the scientific sort to be formulated about them. (133)

When the claims of relativism are turned upon itself, however, it becomes totally incoherent. For example, Winch argues that there are no transcendent attributes or truths for various societies. Rather, they share family resemblances, meaning they only have related and overlapping features. However, this claim forces one to ask how Winch can know this apparently universal truth. In order to make this claim, he has to be able to transcend these family resemblances and see reality as a whole. Otherwise his theory is just part of another language cave and does not hold true for all societies. In order to give his theory any credibility, Winch would be forced to concede that his one truth is an exception to his relativistic theory, raising the possibility that there are others.

[8] Cf. Nietzsche, *SE*, 3. In his book, *Nietzsche's Task*, Lampert argues that this view was also Plato's view:

> As unfamiliar as this description of the philosopher as an actor who creates values may appear, it is the description of the philosopher put forward guardedly but with monumental effect by Plato. Plato argued that the end of knowledge is contemplation, but Plato wrote the dialogues that created the values of our civilization, and that did not happen inadvertently. In Plato's description of the philosopher's ascent, a point is reached at which the philosopher hears the imperative issued by Socrates: 'You must go down!' That imperative beautifully mimics the first word of the *Republic*: 'Down I went.' The *Republic* itself is an act of political philosophy, of value creation, by a genuine philosopher. It is not only Glaucon and Adeimantus who will never be the same after spending that night in the Piraeus with Socrates. (197-98)

act. The philosopher provides a coherent interpretation of the experiential world; which then serves as the framework within which people understand the world. Thus, the philosopher is god-like: he is a creator of religions, which is to say, of the 'worlds' ordinary people inhabit. As Wagner creates new worlds through music in his operas, the philosopher recreates the world through a rational account of the whole. This is not to say that the philosopher dreams up just any interpretation of the world—he is no sorcerer with the power to alter nature. As Nietzsche explains in section 3, the most vital task of philosophy is to determine what is fixed in the character of the world and what is alterable. As revealed by Silenic wisdom, there is a primary and universally shared character of human existence. The genuine philosopher cannot alter this permanent reality; he can only shape our posture towards, and how we evaluate action within, this reality. Given these bounds, the genuine philosopher legislates for humanity, directing it on the path of life.

Practically speaking, the defining task of genuine philosophers—the "commanders and legislators" of the world—is creating horizons, and thus our 'lived-in' world.[9] As such, the philosopher is the highest poet: as a poet creates fictional worlds, the philosopher, through his interpretation of the world, creates the world known to us. To communicate his ideas to the people, he necessarily resorts to myths, and to that extent rules by means of "persuasive poetry."[10] Such world-forming thinkers are few. Moreover, it is not enough that a philosopher think and create: to legislate, his ideas must actually be brought to bear on human existence. To make an impression on mankind, the philosopher must ensure that his thoughts do not pass away unheard—blown away "as though they were flakes of snow" (1/1). Thinkers need practical actors to carry their thoughts into the institutions and activities of the everyday world, thereby informing the souls of people. This is the mutual relationship—the natural 'division of labour'—between the man of action and the man of thought.

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[9] Nietzsche, *BGE*, 211.

[10] As Plato implies in the *Republic*. Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task*, 196.

In light of the Nietzschean view of the role of ideas in human affairs, the manner in which the reader is to view history is established. Given that philosophy forms the architecture within which mankind lives and acts, to understand the foundation of history one must look to the thoughts that have governed the world; all other events can be filtered out as superfluous. In view of the fact that few formative thoughts have made a lasting impression on the existence of man, in this respect, history is short. Against this background, Nietzsche reveals the key to understanding the course of Western civilization heretofore. At the base lies the "twofold task of the great Alexander:" the "Hellenisation of the world and, to make this possible, the orientalization of the Hellenic" (4/1). Of note, Nietzsche does not identify Alexander's military successes as the reason for his great importance to mankind—they were but the means to an end. Upon consideration of Nietzsche's claim, it emerges that what makes the deed of Alexander of primary importance to history is the flow of ideas facilitated by his conquests.

One may be astonished by Nietzsche's attributing such primary importance to Alexander. To understand why Alexander's deed was the "last great event" and its ramifications, it is necessary to examine the world before Alexander and after Alexander (4/1). According to our understanding of history, the pivotal moment—an event seen as so significant that it divides history into two parts—is marked by the birth of Jesus the Christ. Nietzsche subtly suggests *anno Domini* (A.D.) be replaced by *anno Alexander*

(A.A.) and, likewise, 'before Christ' (B.C.) be replaced by 'before Alexander' (B.A.). Equally astonishing—and perhaps even more puzzling—is Nietzsche's judgment that this task of Alexander is the *last* great event. Surely, one might counter, there have been subsequent great events. For example, the Roman Empire, the Renaissance, the discovery of the New World, the Reformation, the scientific revolution, the French Revolution—all seem worthy to be recorded in the history books as great events that have shaped Western civilization. Yet, Nietzsche consciously subordinates *all* subsequent events to Alexander's deed. On what basis, one must then ask, does he do so?

To understand the significance of Alexander's deed, two factors must be examined: the Hellenic and the Oriental. 'Hellenism' may be conventionally, hence provisionally, defined as "the culture, ideals, and pattern of life of ancient Greece in classical times."[11] More specifically, 'Hellenism' is usually associated with the Greek world, especially Athens, during the Age of Pericles.[12] Nietzsche uses 'Hellenic' in both these senses. In its broadest meaning, he uses 'Hellenic' to distinguish Greek culture from that of the barbarians. Nietzsche's use of 'Oriental' refers to the barbarians, more particularly, the culture of the peoples of Asia.[13] Like the Apollonian and the Dionysian, the Hellenic and the Oriental are antagonistic cultural perspectives and thus involved in perpetual strife; it is the supremacy of either the Hellenic or the Oriental that gives shape to the culture of a given time.

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[11] 'Hellenism,' *The Columbia Encyclopaedia*, 6th edition.

[12] Pericles (c.495-429 B.C.) first gained prominence in Athens in 462, becoming a popular leader. He was continuously in power as elected strategos from 443-429 B.C. During this time, at peace with Sparta, Athens reached the heights of her cultural and imperial achievements. Architecture and sculpture reached its highest perfection, and amongst the many temples and buildings constructed were the Propylaea, Parthenon and Odeum. Tragic drama thrived during this time. While Aeschylus had died in 456 B.C., his plays were still performed, as well as those of Sophocles (c.496-406 B.C.) and Euripides (480 or 485-406 B.C.). Herodotus (484?-425? B.C.), Thucydides (c.460-c.400 B.C.), and Socrates (469-399 B.C.) also lived during this period.

[13] By definition, "barbarism" is the absence of true culture in the sense of cultivating the perfection of human nature. Thus, in this instance, "culture" is used in relation to the Orient more loosely, referring to their general way of life, customs and beliefs.

Before Alexander conquered most of the ancient world—from Eastern Mediterranean Europe to India—the Greeks and the barbarians were geographically separated, and thus too were the Hellenic and Oriental cultures. While the Greeks had traveled to barbaric regions as merchants, artists, and mercenary soldiers, it was not until Alexander that the Greeks thoroughly permeated the world of the barbarians, spreading Greek language and culture. Alexander, as Nietzsche notes in section 1, brought these two worlds together: "he caused Asia and Europe to be drunk out of the same cup," consequently bringing the Hellenic and the Oriental into close and continual contact (1/5). The result was not the immediate abolition of one or the other; the Hellenic initially dominated for many centuries, but it was an orientalised form of the Hellenic. In time, the Oriental grew in strength and influence, mainly with the spread of Christianity. Becoming the dominant force in the world, it reduced the Hellenic influence to a pale and distant shadow.

By virtue of his conquests, Alexander spread Hellenic culture, education, and ideas throughout the Middle East and Asia. At the same time, as Alexander travelled through the lands of the barbarians, thereby Hellenizing the Oriental, he also incorporated elements of the Oriental into the Hellenic. One such contentious element was absolute despotism. As Arrian and Plutarch relate, Alexander adopted the Persian mode of dress and took on the characteristics of an Oriental despot (an office alien to Greek participatory citizenship).[14] Alexander also sought to mix the Persians and the Macedonians, so "that by this mixture and interchange of manners with one another, he should by friendship more than force, make them agree lovingly together."[15] To this end, he had Persian boys educated in the Greek language, and trained and exercised in the Greek discipline of war. Alexander also incorporated the Persians into the Greek army: he "mixed the Persian royal guards, who carried golden apples at the end of their spears, among the ranks of the Macedonians, and the Persian peers with the Macedonian body guards."[16] Arrian explains that Alexander did these things as "a political device in regard to the foreigners, that the king might not appear altogether alien to them."[17] While Alexander may not have been fully aware of the far-reaching consequences of such actions, in retrospect we can see he was transforming the world.

After Alexander's death in 323 B.C., the influence of Hellenic culture continued to spread throughout Asia. The city of Alexandria, founded in Egypt by order of Alexander, exerted a great force in commerce, letters, and art, thus lending its name to this era: the Alexandrian Age. Greek became the universal language of the educated, causing an increase in both the composition and the spread of Greek literature. In Alexandria and Pergamum, great libraries were founded, and anthologies and catalogues were made. Here we find the prototype of the modern scholar: a collector and accumulator of knowledge, chained to this life by "the Socratic love of knowledge and the delusion of being able thereby to heal the eternal wound of existence."[18] Importantly, the continued spread of Hellenic culture and language facilitated the dissemination of Greek philosophy.

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[14] Greek 'tyrants' were never absolute in the Oriental sense, and in any case had long been a rarity. Cf. Arrian, *The Anabasis of Alexander*, Book VII.29; Plutarch, 'Life of Alexander the Great,' *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, paragraph 45.

[15] Plutarch, paragraph 47.

[16] Arrian, Book VII.29; cf. Plutarch, paragraph 71.

[17] Arrian, Book VII.29.

As Greek philosophy permeated the world, it was no longer insulated from the influence of the Oriental. In particular, elements of the Oriental—such as asceticism, despotism, mysticism, and morality—were incorporated into, and integrated with, Platonism. The result was Christianity.[19] Herein lies the great significance of Alexander's task.[20] It is thus necessary to pause and consider Platonism, and its original source. Plato, preceding Alexander, witnessed the decline of the Homeric religion.

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[18] Nietzsche, *BT*, 18.

[19] As Lampert notes in *Nietzsche's Task* (69), Nietzsche is explicit about the historical link between Plato and Christianity in 'What I Owe to the Ancients,' *Twilight of the Idols*. Quoting Nietzsche:

> In the great disaster of Christianity, Plato is that ambiguity and fascination, called an 'ideal,' which made it possible for the nobler natures of antiquity to misunderstand themselves and to step on the *bridge* which led to the 'cross' (2).

In subsequent references, *Twilight of the Idols* will be abbreviated *TI*.

In *History of Political Ideas*, vol. I, Eric Voegelin also associates Alexander with the development of Christianity, but more directly. He argues that Alexander consciously sought to bring the two cultures together. This is symbolised by his prayer: "God is the common father of all men." Voegelin explains: "Alexander's prayer not only includes the Persians in the homonoia, but it seems that the king has given the idea a new function in the evocation of his empire." Quoting Eratosthenes:

> 'Alexander believed that he had a mission from the deity to harmonize men generally and be the reconciler of the world, mixing men's lives and customs as in a loving cup, and treating the good as his kin, the bad as strangers; for he thought that the good man was the real Greek and the bad man the real barbarian.'

Alexander's idea, Voegelin continues:

> marks the beginning of a great development. Homonoia became the basic community concept of the Hellenistic and later of the Roman world (*Concordia*), and through the Epistles of Saint Paul the idea became one of the founding elements of democracy. Wherever the Christian community idea has penetrated and the category of like-mindedness is effected…we are faced by effects of Alexander's prayer at Opis. (93-4)

Nietzsche [illegible]ht add that Alexander's conception of a single God common to all men was only possible *after* Plato.

[20] Alexander is more commonly associated with his great teacher: Aristotle. However, for Nietzsche, it is Platonism that is the dominant force in the history of Western civilization. Aristotle is inconceivable apart from the twenty years he spent at Plato's Academy.

Faced with the waning power of the Homeric interpretation of the world, Plato saw the need to provide a new interpretation: "The crisis of Homeric religion evoked from Plato the effort to replace Homeric gods with moral gods and the Homeric mortal soul with an immortal one."[21] In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche blames Plato for his "invention of the pure spirit and the good as such."[22] The result was a new religion, which in turn, created a whole new world of culture:

> Homeric religion, arising from gratitude, was a noble stance toward nature and life, one that generated the highest artistic and intellectual achievements of humanity so far. Platonic religion, grounded in fears, was a slavish subjugation to invented supernatural powers and led eventually to the capture of European humanity by an Asian religion of total human abnegation before a sovereign, redeeming deity.[23]

Plato's 'error,' Nietzsche argues, "the worst, most durable, and most dangerous of all errors so far," was a "dogmatist's error."[24] While perhaps on the one hand a salutary teaching at the time, Plato's invention or 'error' is dangerous as its teaching is vulnerable to usurpation by religion, leading to the subjugation of philosophy by religion—or, in other words, the rule of Jerusalem over Athens.[25]

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[21] Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task*, 108. Cf. Socrates' revision of religion in his discussion with Adeimantus on the poetry necessary for the education of the guardians in the City in Speech, as well as the Myth of Er. Plato, *Republic*, 377e-391e, 614b-621d.

[22] Nietzsche, 'Preface,' *BGE*. As Lampert remarks in *Nietzsche and Modern Times*, Nietzsche's ultimate view of Platonism is not fully articulated until his later works, especially *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. However, precursors of this final view are found in the *Untimely Meditations*. (293-4)

[23] Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task*, 108-9. The "Asian religion" is that of the Old Testament: the Israelites were included with the barbarians.

Cf. Nietzsche, *BGE*: "Later, when the rabble gained the upper hand in Greece, *fear* became rampant in religion, too—and the ground was prepared for Christianity" (49).

[24] Nietzsche, 'Preface,' *BGE*.

[25] Lampert, *Nietzsche's Philosophy and True Religion*. Nietzsche criticises Plato (or, at least Plato's exoteric teaching) in 'What I Owe to the Ancients,' *Twilight of the Idols*:

History, seen through Nietzschean eyes, substantiates his claim that Alexander's deed was the last great event: through the great deed of Alexander, Platonism spread through Asia, where, worked through with Orientalism, it eventually developed into Christianity—or, as Nietzsche later calls it, "Platonism for 'the people.'"[26] If one looks at history in light of the interplay between the Hellenic and the Oriental, one will see that Christianity is "a piece of oriental antiquity, thought and worked through by men with excessive thoroughness" (4/1). Thus does Jacob Burckhardt, a contemporaneous colleague much respected by Nietzsche, identify an instance of this orientalization of Platonism.[27] Burckhardt argues that as Platonism came into contact with the Oriental, there was a "peculiar compromise concluded between ancient Greek subjectivity and [O]rient[al] taste for miracles and abstinence."[28] Hellenism was finally overcome by the Oriental, which prevailed in Christianity. With enough time, religion ultimately triumphed over philosophy in the hands of Saint Augustine:

> In the end, my mistrust of Plato goes deep: he represents such an aberration from all the basic instincts of the Hellene, is so moralistic, so pre-existently Christian—he already takes the concept 'good' for the highest concept—that for the whole phenomenon Plato I would sooner use the harsh phrase 'higher swindle,' or, if it sounds better, 'idealism,' than any other. We have paid dearly for the fact that this Athenian got his schooling from the Egyptians (or from the Jews in Egypt?). In that great calamity, Christianity, Plato represents that ambiguity and fascination, called an 'ideal,' which made it possible for the nobler spirits of antiquity to misunderstand themselves and to set foot on the bridge leading to the cross. And how much Plato there still is in the concept 'church,' in the construction, system, and practice of the church! (2)

[26] Nietzsche, 'Preface,' *BGE*.

[27] An example of Nietzsche's respect for Burckhardt is found in Nietzsche, 'What the Germans Lack,' *Twilight of the Idols*:

> Educators are lacking, not counting the most exceptional of exceptions, the very first condition of education: hence the decline of German culture. One of this rarest of exceptions is my venerable friend, Jacob Burckhardt in Basel: it is primarily to him that Basel owes its pre-eminence in humaneness. (5)

[28] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Age of Constantine the Great*, 191.

> As a Roman he inherited and restated for his own time the political philosophy inaugurated by Plato and adapted to the Latin world by Cicero, and as a Christian he modified that philosophy to suit the requirements of that faith.[29]

Hence, the process begun by Alexander concluded with Western civilization firmly bounded within the horizons of Christianity, and the shadow of Plato's 'dogmatic error' was cast over the next two millennia. Having stripped away the non-essential from history, Nietzsche indicates that understanding this Christianised Platonism is essential to knowing who we are. Thus, the basis of Nietzsche's claim is revealed: Alexander's deed is the last great event because he began the process that eventually resulted in the Platonization of the world via Christianity, and thus the creation of the world as it is known to us. Alexander's deed has yet to be surpassed, as no deed has yet overcome this Christianised Platonism.

iii. Science and Modern Culture

Despite its entrenchment, Christianised Platonism has not ruled unchallenged. As Nietzsche elaborates in his later works (especially *Beyond Good and Evil*), there has been a long spiritual war against Christianised Platonism, at the end of which we now stand. The most recent battle of this war, led by Francis Bacon and René Descartes, was the struggle of modern science against Christianity, from which science emerged victorious.[30] Science, that "gleaming and glorious star," in its unlimited demand to know everything, seeks to penetrate the veil of illusion cast over existence—to uncover truth, thereby making the world intelligible.[31] In doing so, it erodes and erases the "vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of *homo natura*," hence exposing the 'noble lies' of Platonism and revealing 'deadly truths' about reality.[32] Science necessarily destroys horizons, for its quest to illuminate natural reality is at odds with revelation, myth, and illusion.[33] As Plato usurped the Homeric gods, science has usurped the Christian God:

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[29] Ernest L. Fortin, 'St. Augustine,' in *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, 176.

[30] Bacon and Descartes were the champions of modern science. They were not unrelated to the ancients, however; the roots of modern science can be traced back to Platonism. The ancestor of Bacon and

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Descartes is Socrates, who Nietzsche identifies as the first theoretical man. Socrates sought to penetrate the veil of illusion cast over existence—to uncover truth and make the world intelligible—thus giving a "new and unprecedented value…on knowledge and insight" (*BT*, 12). At the foundation of science rests this quest of Socrates: it too is an unlimited desire to know everything and is driven by a love of knowledge. Lampert describes this "philosophic spirit"—a spirit opposite to that of tragedy—in his book, *Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:' "the spirit of gravity, the spirit of Socratic or 'Alexandrian' man, rational optimists who demand that all beings be thinkable and follow the cowardly way of deduction or proof" (162). The rise in science in the modern world finds its beginnings in Platonism and the Alexandrian Age. As the world was Hellenised and Platonic philosophy spread throughout the world, Plato's image of Socrates, immortalised in his dialogues, spread too. Furthermore, science, already growing in Greece by virtue of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, gained momentum throughout the ancient world through the support of Alexander and some of his generals. Ptolemy I, Macedonian general and Pharaoh of Egypt after Alexander's death, founded the Museum of Alexandria and supported scientific study.

That science in the Alexandrian Age was carried out in an Aristotelian framework, thus differing in method and aim from modern science, this does not depreciate the importance of the science of this earlier age. H.G. Wells' condensed and popularised account of history, *A Short History of the World*, while not highly respected for its scholarship among historians, nonetheless provides a useful summary of the scientific achievements during this era: "For a generation or so during the reigns of Ptolemy I and Ptolemy II there was such a blaze of knowledge and discovery at Alexandria as the world was not to see again until the sixteenth century A.D." Wells lists achievements of this era:

> Euclid, Eratosthenes who measured the size of the earth and came within fifty miles of its true diameter, Apollonius who wrote on conic sections, Hipparchus who made the first star map and catalogue, and Hero who devised the first steam engine, are among the greater stars of an extraordinary constellation of scientific pioneers. Archimedes came from Syracuse to Alexandria to study, and was a frequent correspondent of the Museum. Herophilus was one of the greatest of Greek anatomists, and is said to have practised vivisection. (106)

[31] Nietzsche, *UD*, 4.

[32] Nietzsche, *BGE*, 230. Cf. *UD*, 4, 9, 10. Plato saw it necessary to hide "deadly truths" about reality behind "noble" or "necessary" lies. Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task*, 16, 229.

[33] In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche identifies the mission of science, communicated by the emblem above "the entrance gate of science…namely, to make existence appear comprehensible and thus justified" (15).

hence Nietzsche's claim, "God is dead."[34] However, whereas Plato laid the basis for a new religion in the place of Homer, modern science has not repeated such a creative act: it has only torn down the edifices of Christianity, undercutting Orientalism in modern culture and leaving a void in its place. The madman's speech in *The Gay Science* expresses the terror felt upon the 'death' of God:

> Wither are we moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night and more night coming on all the while?[35]

As a result of the horizon-altering effects of modern science, modern man can no longer seek refuge and comfort in the old conception of an eternal and unchangeable world governed by purpose, nor can he gain a sense of meaning from the old religion—this god cannot be resurrected. As Nietzsche describes in the second 'untimely one,'

> life itself caves in and grows weak and fearful when the *concept-quake* caused by science robs man of the foundation of all his rest and security, his belief in the enduring and eternal.[36]

Man, lacking belief in a God or gods, finds himself alone in a boundless universe. One interpretation of existence has collapsed. However, because "it was considered *the* interpretation it now seems as if there were no meaning at all in existence, as if everything were in vain."[37] Now mistrusting "any 'meaning' in suffering, indeed in existence," modern man risks becoming a nihilist.[38]

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[34] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 125. In subsequent references, *The Gay Science* will be abbreviated *GS*.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Nietzsche, *UD*, 10.

[37] Nietzsche, 'Book One,' *The Will to Power*, 55 (June 10, 1877).

[38] Ibid.

Science, in its quest to uncover truth, has left no realm untouched: as it peers into the secrets of nature, relentlessly digs up the past, and marches forward in its quest for knowledge, it "wipe[s] away the entire horizon."[39] The result is an increasing reawakening of the awareness of the true nature of existence, expressed in the wisdom of Silenus. According to the ancient Greek folk tale, this Greek deity and companion of Dionysus revealed to man the meaningless of life and the inevitability of suffering and injustice. King Midas, having hunted and finally captured Silenus, demanded this ultimate wisdom from the deity: "what [is] the best and most desirable of all things for man?"[40] Silenus, while reluctant to answer, upon the repeated urging of the king,

> gave a shrill laugh and broke out into these words: 'Oh, wretched ephemeral race, children of chance and misery, why do you compel me to tell you what it would be most expedient for you not to hear? What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second best for you is—to die soon.'[41]

Nietzsche argues that Christianised Platonism hid this truth beneath a veil of illusion, namely, of there being an eternal soul and an 'afterlife,' ruled by a just and benevolent God, maker of heaven and earth, creator of man in His own image, who imparts meaning and order to existence. However, the ceaselessly inquisitive eye of science has once again revealed the truth: "man now sees everywhere only the horror or absurdity of existence."[42] Reconfronting the meaninglessness of life, tragic insight has broken through our illusions and gained power in human life.

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[39] Nietzsche, *GS*, 125. Similarly, in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche explains,

> Like the artist, the theoretical man finds an infinite delight in whatever exists, and this satisfaction protects him against the practical ethics of pessimism with its Lynceus eyes that shine only in the dark. Whenever the truth is uncovered, the artist will always cling with rapt gaze to what still remains covering even after such uncovering; but the theoretical man enjoys and finds satisfaction in the discarded covering and finds the highest object of his pleasure in the process of an ever happy uncovering that succeeds through his own efforts. (15)

[40] Nietzsche, *BT*, 3.

[41] Ibid. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Sophocles expresses this wisdom on stage through the voice of the chorus. (1211-1248).

As seen in Socrates' trial, there is a tension between the pursuit of knowledge and truth, on the one hand, and the beliefs requisite for wholesome political life, on the other.[43] Most men cannot live altogether healthy lives in the atmosphere created by the radical skepticism of science and the psychological implications of its discoveries. Continually, if only dimly aware of Selinic wisdom, men become paralyzed by the meaninglessness of life. The hazard of gaining the knowledge science seeks—of looking truly into the essence of things—is that man will experience reality with "nausea," which, Nietzsche argues, inhibits action. This is because man, epitomised by Shakespeare's Hamlet, now realises,

> [his] action could not change anything in the eternal nature of things; [he] feel[s] it to be ridiculous or humiliating that [he] should be asked to set right a world that is out of joint. Knowledge kills action; action requires the veils of illusion…true knowledge, an insight into the horrible truth outweighs any motive for action….[44]

Not able to forget what he has learned, modern man needs something that will enable him to affirm life despite this knowledge. Merely to endure this tragic insight, Nietzsche argues, man "needs art as a protection and a remedy."[45] In Homeric Greece, the Apollonian artistic impulse towards beauty provided the antidote to Silenus:

> The same impulse which calls art into being, as the complement and consummation of existence, seducing one to a continuation of life, was also the cause of the Olympian world which the Hellenic

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[42] Ibid., 7.

[43] Plato, *Apology*. Cf. Aristophanes, *The Clouds*.

[44] Nietzsche, *BT*, 7.

[45] Ibid., 15.

> 'will' made use of as a transfiguring mirror. Thus do the gods justify the life of man: they themselves live it—the only satisfactory theodicy! Existence under the bright sunshine of such gods is regarded as desirable in itself, and the real pain of Homeric men is caused by parting from it, especially by early parting: so that now, reversing the wisdom of Silenus, we may say of the Greeks that 'to die soon is worst of all for them, the next worst—to die at all.'[46]

When one observes the surface of Homeric culture, one only sees the glorious Olympian gods. The reality exposed by Silenus is buried under the overflowing life of the gods; visible are "the accents of an exuberant, triumphant life in which all things, whether good or evil, are deified."[47] Thus, despite their awareness of Silenus, the Homeric Greeks were high-spirited and full of life. Science, however, has undermined modern man's ability to believe in any such illusion. Thus, we need an art that will once again reconcile us with the reality revealed by science, providing life with some redeeming value.

In the past, science itself was able to proffer some comfort to those "who actually feel profoundly the weight and burden of existence" by providing its own illusion that enveloped reality.[48] The illusion which gave man hope was,

> the unshakable faith that thought, using the thread of causality, can penetrate the deepest abysses of being, and that thought is capable not only of knowing being but even of *correcting* it.[49]

This is the illusion and optimism of "Alexandrian" culture—our modern culture.[50] Optimistically, we have put our faith in science, praying that it can redeem existence by conquering nature, even 'correcting' it, and thus creating a new heaven on earth. This illusion, however, like Christianised Platonism, can no longer provide man with meaningful comfort. As science has progressed, exposing 'deadly truths' along with its own limitations to cope with those truths, it has undermined its own illusion: "modern man is beginning to divine the limits of this Socratic love of knowledge and yearns for a coast in the wide waste of the ocean of knowledge."[51] Thus, the optimism of modern science is supplanted by the pessimism of tragic insight.

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[46] Ibid., 3.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 18.

[49] Ibid., 15.

[50] The modern world, Nietzsche argues in *The Birth of Tragedy*, "is entangled in the net of Alexandrian culture." This is evidenced by our respect for the scholar (who, for a long time, was the modern 'cultured' man, exemplified by Faust) and the dominance of science. (18)

We may find solace, however, in the realization that our situation is not entirely novel. Looking to a previous age—a different cave—helps one gain a new perspective on modernity: one higher and more distant, elucidating not only the problem but indicating a solution. In *Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche argues that "to him who knows history," and who also looks carefully at our contemporary world, "it must seem more as though he were recognizing the old familiar features of a face." Nietzsche, who has just demonstrated that he knows history, recognises this face: it is "the pale features of the Hellenic [which] appear ghostlike in the distance." Our culture once again "stand[s] in the closest proximity to the Alexandrian-Hellenic world." We have been moving "through the chief epochs of the Hellenic genius analogically in *reverse* order, and seem now, for instance, to be passing backward from the Alexandrian Age to the period of tragedy."[52] Thus, we see "that the pendulum of history has swung back to the point from which it started its swing into enigmatic distant and lost horizons" (4/1).

Recent experiences of modern man find a parallel in phenomena experienced by the Hellenes at the dawn of the Alexandrian Age: the decline of the Homeric religion and its battle against the East; the relegation of Greek myth from a way of understanding and source of life to a historical fact to be observed and studied; the destructive force of science on Greek horizons; and the opening of Greek borders, which had previously closed in, protected, and unified Hellenic society, now leaving their culture vulnerable to being undermined by foreign ideas and customs.[53] The effects of these phenomena on Greek society are symbolically rendered by Alexander's cutting of the Gordian knot.[54] Greek culture, consisted of many threads (religion, art, history, education, customs, etc.) tightly bounded into a coherent, unified whole. However, the great deed of Alexander incised the heart of this culture, loosening all the strands, which then "fluttered to all the corners of the earth" (4/1). Liberated from subordination to the whole and exposed to contaminating influences, these threads became feeble and inactive; the power of Hellenic culture slowly dissipated, finally being reduced to a chaotic fragile web at risk of being blown away altogether.

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[51] This is evident, Nietzsche argues in *The Birth of Tragedy*, by placing Faust next to Socrates for the purpose of comparison (18). Cf. Nietzsche's discussions on the limitations of logic in *The Birth of Tragedy*, 15 and the dangers of our declining culture in *The Birth of Tragedy*, 18.

[52] Nietzsche, *BT*, 20.

Looking back at history, we can appreciate the initially creative, but ultimately destructive consequences of Alexander's horizon-altering deed, and understand how, over time, Christianised Platonism built its horizons on the ruins of Hellenic horizons. This enables us to understand ourselves—both who we are and the challenges we are now facing. Modern man stands at the same threshold as the Hellenes of Alexander's day: our culture is unraveling into a chaotic mix of antithetical ideas and ways of life; our horizons are being broken down by the discoveries of modern science; and the world is increasingly complicated by a burgeoning influx of indigestible information, threatening us with being overwhelmed by what is "past and foreign."[55] In short, our culture, already weak, is degenerating, and we too are moving into "enigmatic distant and lost horizons." This is not necessarily unhealthy in and of itself—the outcome depends on our reaction. We stand poised for the next great event. The time has come for Platonism to give way to something new; our world is ready for a final overcoming of Christianity and the establishment of a new theocracy—this, and only this, will be the next great event. Thus Nietzsche, who earlier portrayed himself as John the Baptist preparing the way for the saviour of art, is preparing the way for a much greater deed: the recreation of the world.

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[53] Cf. Nietzsche, *UD*, 10; *BT*, 10.

[54] Arrian, Book II.3. Plutarch, paragraph 18.

iv. Wagner's Task

In following Nietzsche through his simplified cultural history of the world, the reader gains an outsider's perspective on modern man. This perspective is necessary to know ourselves, including the challenges we face and our real needs. In turn, this self-knowledge is essential if we are to begin to "organize the chaos within" into a unitary whole.[56] As Nietzsche teaches in the second *Untimely Meditation*, only having done this will we be capable of realizing genuine culture. In this fourth 'untimely one,' Nietzsche spells out our situation in more substantial detail. We find ourselves at the end of the process begun by Alexander: the earth having been "sufficiently orientalized, longs again for the Hellenic" (4/1). Our longing for the Hellenic is not for the Alexandrian-Hellenic, but for a still earlier time—the brief 'tragic age of the Greeks.'[57] These earlier Hellenes share a condition of existence with modern man: they too knew the wisdom of Silenus, as it is clearly expressed in their folk tales. Yet, this strong and courageous people were neither nauseated nor paralyzed by their awareness of this reality, as we are so threatened. Through their tragic art—that "saving sorceress"—the Hellenes acknowledged the wisdom of Silenus and shared in the suffering of Dionysus, yet still sent out a resounding "Yes!" to life.[58]

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[55] Nietzsche, *UD*, 11.

[56] Nietzsche, *UD*, 10.

However, as Socrates said to Glaucon, "for everything that has come into being there is decay."[59] The 'tragic culture' of the Hellenes was no exception: it too met its demise. Nietzsche argues in *The Birth of Tragedy* that it "was diverted from its course by the dialectical desire for knowledge and the optimism of science."[60] Later, as Christianised Platonism and its faith in an ideal became entrenched, tragic insight was further denigrated—even forgotten. The fate of the tragic appeared sealed with the establishment of modern science and its promise of redemption. Nevertheless, the ghost of this 'tragic culture' still haunts the land. The extent of the powers of science is being pushed to the limits; as we realise the limitations of science, once again tragic insight breaks through.[61] No art or religion can change or hide our mortal existence and the suffering inherent in our condition: this is a fixed aspect of human life that cannot be altered or denied. Whereas man once took refuge in faith in God or science, modern science precludes belief in the hitherto dominant comedies—Christianity and Baconianism—and their utopian dreams.[62] The only art-form that harmonises with modern scientific knowledge is tragedy:

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[57] This short period in Hellenic history, roughly corresponding with the Age of Pericles (i.e. Fifth Century B.C., see note 12 of this chapter), falls between the defeat of the Persians at Marathon and the arrival of Socrates on the world stage. It was dominated by the tragic poetry of Aeschylus and Sophocles. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche associates the height of tragic drama with Aeschylus and Sophocles. He marks the end of this era by Euripides and Socrates, by whose hands, he argues, tragedy died. It is notable that he would have us regard Wagner as the modern counterpart to Aeschylus.

[58] Discussing *The Birth of Tragedy* in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche defines the Dionysian as such: "Saying Yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems; the will to life rejoicing over its own inexhaustibility even in the very sacrifice of its highest types" (3).

[59] Plato, *Republic*, 546a.

[60] Nietzsche, *BT*, 17.

> Tragedy is the artistic affirmation of the deadly truth about human things and all things. It refuses pessimism and nihilism and does not flee the world known to be mortal. It does not ground the earthly things in some cosmological or rational necessity of supposedly greater dignity or take revenge on the earth for being what it is. Nor does it engage in the masked revenge of a hopeless optimism that the earth might be made other than it is.[63]

The long detour in history begun by Plato and Alexander has come to an end: man must return to tragedy. For this to happen, the dispersed threads of Hellenism must be gathered from all corners of the globe and once again brought together. Only when all the elements of society are rewoven into a unified and coherent whole will man again have genuine culture that meets his needs. Having identified our need, Nietzsche makes clear the solution:

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[61] Ibid., 15, 17. In *Nietzsche's Teaching*, Lampert explains how Socrates and Christianised Platonism has gone full circle:

> The force of Socratic rationalism had rent that most beautiful artistic veil that had been drawn over the terrible and tragic truth expressed by Silenos, associate of Dionysos.... Socratic rationalism had refused both Silenian truth and the art of tragedy that had remade that ugly truth into a magnificent affirmation of mortal life; it had attempted to make all beings thinkable, or permanent and beautiful. But the dream vanished...and with its disappearance came the reappearance of Silenian wisdom in the teaching of...modern nihilism. This reappearance brought about by the honesty of the sublime modern inquirers promises the possibility of a new artistic affirmation of the seemingly deadly truths of existence. (231)

[62] Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*, 296.

[63] Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 232.

> he who wants to assist here has need of speed and a winged foot, to be sure, if he is to bring together all the manifold disseminated points of knowledge, the remotest continents of talent, to run through and command the whole tremendous region. Thus it is that we now have need of a series of *counter-Alexanders* possessing the mighty capacity to draw together and unite, to reach the remotest threads [of the Gordian knot] and to preserve the web from being blown away. Not to cut the Gordian knot, as Alexander did…but *to tie it again*—that is now the task. (4/1)

Nietzsche's call for a series of counter-Alexanders is not antiquarianism on his part—he does not seek to return to the past *per se*. In a spiritual sense we must return to the Greeks insofar as we share their tragic insight; this 'return,' however, is urged by Nietzsche while looking forward to the future. Using the Greeks as an example of a culture founded on the tragic, Nietzsche is seeking the birth of a genuine culture that is unique to modern man.

The counter-Alexander stands in marked distinction from the 'polyhistor' or cultural collector of today. The counter-Alexander can create a living culture. The polyhistor "only brings together and arranges" aspects of different cultures, thus producing a colourful mosaic that lacks any real cultural meaning (4/1): "it is not a real culture at all but only a kind of knowledge of culture; it has an idea of and feeling for culture but no true cultural achievement emerges from them."[64] The *unification* (as opposed to collection) of all of the threads into a living structure is necessary in order to unify a people, create a world within which they can act, and give birth to a true culture—that is, a coherent environment wherein whole men are cultivated and their human faculties perfected. Herein lies Wagner's significance for modernity: Nietzsche identifies him as one such counter-Alexander. In light of Nietzsche's call for a whole series of counter-Alexanders, one must ask who else Nietzsche might include in these ranks. One is tempted to consider Nietzsche himself as a counter-Alexander—perhaps the philosophic counterpart to the artistic Wagner. Yet, given his synoptic understanding of the world and his rational account of the task of such men, Nietzsche seems to surpass the counter-Alexander, his task somehow being greater in scope and significance.

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[64] Nietzsche, *UD*, 4.

What makes Wagner a counter-Alexander, Nietzsche explains, is that "he possesses an *astringent* power." Medically speaking, an astringent draws together and constricts tissues; applied externally to the skin, it forms a thin, protective layer. Likewise, Wagner "unites what was separate, feeble and inactive" into a living structure, and his art protects the resulting whole (4/1). What enables Wagner to take such action is his great "*talent for learning*," and his capacity to embrace the many elements of the modern world (3/2)—"the arts, the religions, the histories of various nations" (4/1). Whereas most men are overwhelmed by such knowledge, Wagner is able to absorb and digest all the elements of our complex world and bring them together. As Nietzsche stated elsewhere, Wagner "has a feeling for *unity* in *diversity*."[65] In bringing together the many diverse threads of the world (which often appear unrelated or in opposition), Wagner gives shape to the world as a living, coherent structure. Wagner does this through his art, which "produces the *appearance* of a simpler world, a shorter solution of the riddle of life" (4/3). Wagner's astringent power, Nietzsche argues, is what makes him "one of the truly great cultural masters" (4/1).

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[65] As Fischer-Dieskau recounts, in 1874 it looked like Wagner's idea of a *Festspiel* at Bayreuth would not be realised due to a lack of funds. Nietzsche, upon hearing the news, was troubled and thus wrote down some notes in order to try to understand the situation. As he explained in a letter to Rhode:

> It was a dismal condition, since New Year's, from which I managed to rescue myself in a most peculiar fashion: with the greatest coolness of observation I started investigating why the enterprise had failed. In so doing, I learned a great deal, and I believe that now I understand Wagner much better than before.

Nietzsche's notes on this occasion are wholly replicated by Fischer-Dieskau, who explains:

> [t]he notes...were apparently intended for a book, though not for immediate publication. The chapter headings and a few additional aphorisms already bear the title of the fourth *Untimely Reflection*: *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*.

These notes are revealing of Nietzsche's earlier thoughts of Wagner and testify to some of his doubts regarding the composer during the last few years of their friendship. In these earlier notes Nietzsche does not name Wagner as a counter-Alexander; however, he suggests this task:

In section 1, Nietzsche subtly drew a parallel between Wagner and Alexander. In section 4, he explicitly portrays Wagner as an Alexandrian figure. Neither Alexander nor Wagner—one a great conqueror, the other a great composer—were philosophers; neither sought primarily to understand the world and provide an interpretation thereof. Both were men of action, and as such conveyed others' ideas into the world. Alexander's deed spread Hellenic culture and ideas, which led to the birth of Christianity and began the modern scientific quest (among other consequences); Wagner's deed facilitates the rebirth of the tragic idea. In comparing Wagner to Alexander, one is invited to ask if there is a modern man of thought who stands to Wagner as Plato stood to Alexander—a modern philosopher to stamp the tragic interpretation of life on mankind and construct new horizons to bind him within. Nietzsche is silent on this question in *Wagner in Bayreuth*. In fact, he appears to take pains to avoid openly addressing such a question. Notably, any mention of Plato is conspicuously absent from section 4. Where the opportunity seems naturally to arise, Nietzsche remains silent. For example, discussing the similarities between modern and Hellenic times, Nietzsche draws parallels between contemporary Germans and pre-Alexandrian Greeks: "Kant and the Eleatics,

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> The music isn't worth much, nor is the poetry, the theatrical art is often mere rhetoric—but as a whole everything is a piece and on one level.—[Wagner] has a feeling for *unity* in *diversity*.—That is why I regard him as a bearer of culture.

Fischer-Dieskau, 113-15.

Schopenhauer and Empedocles, Aeschylus and Richard Wagner" (4/1). Yet, upon reflection, the reader might ask if there is a fourth pair. Would this not be where Nietzsche fits in—not as a counter-Alexander, but as the modern philosophical counterpart to Plato who will create an interpretation of the world for modern man? In *Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche does not expressly lay claim to any such philosophical status. At this point in his life, he is still growing into his own as a philosopher. To answer such questions, one must look to Nietzsche's later works, especially *Beyond Good and Evil*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and *Ecce Homo*.

Returning to the historical Wagner—the exoteric subject of Nietzsche's essay—one is led to consider the cultural significance of the great composer. Having laid out Wagner's "most general task" as a counter-Alexander, Nietzsche compares it to "the much narrower [task] which the name of Wagner usually calls to mind:" namely, "a reform of the theatre." At the end of the first paragraph of section 4, Nietzsche invites the reader to compare these two tasks, arguing that they are related:

> One will not misunderstand such an idea [Wagner as a counter-Alexander] if one compares this most general task set for him by his genius with the much narrower one which the name of Wagner usually calls to mind. What is expected of him is a reform of the theatre: supposing he achieved it, what would thereby have been achieved for that higher and remoter task? (4/1)

In the next paragraph, Nietzsche makes clear the relationship between the two tasks. If Wagner were successful in his reform of the theatre, he argues, the ensuing effects of this reform would necessarily lead to the completion of Wagner's higher task:

> [i]t is quite impossible to produce the highest and purest effect of which the art of the theatre is capable without at the same time effecting innovations everywhere, in morality and politics, in education and society.

As a result, then, "[c]ertainly modern man would have been altered and reformed" (4/2). In turn, this would create more counter-Alexanders, who would eventually create an entirely new culture.

In establishing this relationship between Wagner's two tasks—his immediate task in music and drama, and his ultimate task vis-à-vis culture—Nietzsche has given the reader a test by which to assess the composer's success. Nietzsche is cautious here (as he was in section 1 regarding Wagner's grasp of necessity): he makes no positive claims regarding any success on Wagner's part, only 'supposing' he was successful in his reform of the theatre.[66] Again, Nietzsche subtly invites the reader to pause and consider the validity of any doubt on this issue; he himself is guarded, refraining from asserting Wagner's success. Looking from the perspective of a future time, a reader of a later generation might counter that one cannot deny that Wagner changed theatre forever. In response, Nietzsche may ask, does this necessitate that Wagner truly *reformed* the theatre beyond aesthetics, form, and theatre houses, thereby establishing a theatre that stands to modern society as Greek tragedy did to Hellenic Greece? Nietzsche is otherwise silent on this question. Here he speaks to one who still has faith in Wagner, hypothesizing that Wagner did achieve meaningful reform of the theatre, and proceeds to outline the significance of the Bayreuth festival for modern man.

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[66] Nietzsche argued after Wagner's death in *The Case of Wagner* that Wagner was no such revolutionary, but "the artist of decadence," belonging to "the whole of European decadence." Nietzsche further claimed that:

> Wagner's art is sick...Precisely because nothing is more modern than this total sickness, this lateness and overexcitement of the nervous mechanism, Wagner is *the modern artist par excellence*, the Cagliostro of modernity. (5)

However, in his earlier years, still loyal to his friend, Nietzsche left the question open.

Nietzsche concedes that his claims regarding the ability of Wagnerian reform to transform modern man and society may seem to some like an exaggeration. To this skepticism Nietzsche counters that given the interconnected nature of the modern world, "any real reform [in art] could be expected to lead to a similar" transformation of society itself. An unconvinced reader may further question Nietzsche's claim regarding the power of theatre—that frivolous institution dedicated to amusement, distraction, and money-making—and doubt that any theatre, Wagnerian or not, could result in any serious transformation of society. Nietzsche himself agrees with these skeptics' assessment of modern theatre, offering a scathing critique of contemporary theatre and cataloguing its decadent features:

> Strangely clouded judgment, ill-dissembled thirst for amusement, for distraction at any cost, scholarly considerations, pomposity and affectation on the part of the performers, brutal greed for money on that of the proprietors, vacuity and thoughtlessness on that of a society which thinks of the people only insofar as it is employable or dangerous to it and attends concerts and the theatre without any notion of possessing a duty towards them....[67]

These features he argues, contribute to the overall bad air of our culture.[68] However, this vulgarity is not indicative of theatre as such, but reflects the decadence of our society. One must not err in condemning theatre as a whole based on one's experience of the only theatre one knows: the modern theatre. Our theatre, Nietzsche argues, "is a symbol of the degeneration of this life" (4/2). Theatre has not always been this way. To prove his point, Nietzsche looks to the peak of theatre, which coincides with the peak of humanity: theatre in the Hellenic Age.

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[67] Since Nietzsche's day, film has been developed and has come to surpass theatre as the most popular art form. In its essentials, Nietzsche's critique bears on film, perhaps even more heavily.

[68] Several philosophers have been critical of the theatre (most famously, Socrates in Plato's *Republic* and Rousseau in *Letter to M. d'Alembert*). Seeing the ills that accompany the theatre as inescapable, they advocated the censorship of the dramatic arts. Socrates recognised the dangers that art—especially the imitative arts—posed to the nurture of just and virtuous citizens. Thus in constructing the City in Speech—*the* just regime—he severely censored all the arts and exiled the dramatist. Nietzsche, while allowing for the censorship of theatre, argues against Socrates' exile of the dramatist in section 7. On his view, the theatre is not something that can be abolished: it may be that man *needs* the dramatic arts. The task, then, is to establish a theatre that meets this need and elevates mankind. For such a theatre, Nietzsche looks outside of "the musty corrupted air of our world of art today" to a radically different kind of theatre (4/2).

If one compares the Greek form of theatre (which Wagner held up and revered) to that of Wagner's day, it becomes evident that any change in modern theatre to bring it closer to that of the Greeks would necessarily affect theatre-goers in a more comprehensive way. Wagner's own theatre is intended to prove the possibility of such a radical change. Bayreuth, Nietzsche describes, is a "harbour" in the "desert expanse of the sea…a stillness…lie[s] over the water here" (4/2). Upon reaching this harbour, one will experience an atmosphere radically different from that of modern theatre, given the nature of the participants at Bayreuth. Nietzsche describes the theatre at Bayreuth in contrast to theatre of the present day:

> Here you will discover spectators prepared and dedicated, people with the feeling of being at the summit of their happiness and that their whole nature is being pulled together for yet higher and wider endeavours; here you will discover the most devoted self-sacrifice on the part of the artists and, the spectacle of all spectacles, the victorious creator of a work which is itself the epitome of an abundance of victorious artistic deeds. Must it not seem almost like magic to encounter such a phenomenon in the world of today?

Given the dialectical interaction between theatre and society, Nietzsche reasons that this change in theatre will necessarily change modern man and society:

> It is quite impossible to produce the highest and purest effect of which the art of the theatre is capable without at the same time effecting innovations everywhere, in morality and politics, in education and society. Love and justice grown mighty in one domain, in this instance that of art, must in accordance with the law of their inner compulsion extend themselves into other domains and cannot return to the inert condition of their former chrysalis stage.

Spectators of this higher theatre would necessarily be deeply affected: "[m]ust not those who are permitted to participate in it not be transformed and renewed, so as henceforth to transform and renew in other domains of life?" (4/2). If successful, these affects would not fade away outside of the theatre house, but would be carried into the world, changing how men see and act in the world. The effects would thus reverberate throughout society.

v. Bayreuth: the birth of modern tragedy

In the concluding portion of section 4, Nietzsche gives voice to Silenic wisdom and identifies the suffering of modern man. He soberly reflects that mankind will inevitably suffer and that injustice is inescapable; such is an inherent part of the human condition, bound up with our self-consciousness, our nature as seekers of knowledge, and our individuation:

> The greatest causes of suffering there are for the individual—that men do not share all knowledge in common, that ultimate insight can never be certain, that abilities are divided unequally—all this puts him in need of art. We cannot be happy so long as everything around us suffers and creates suffering; we cannot be moral so long as the course of human affairs is determined by force, deception and injustice; we cannot even be wise so long as the whole of mankind has not struggled in competition for wisdom and conducted the individual into life and knowledge in the way dictated by wisdom. (4/3)

In the feeling of this three-fold incapacity—our inability to be happy, moral, and wise—life is unendurable. Realizing the futility of all action, man leans dangerously towards resignation. While this universal incapacity puts all men in need of art, modern man also has a particular need: science, having obliterated all horizons, launches modern man into an "infinite and unbounded sea of light whose light is knowledge of all becoming."[69] As he drifts upon this sea, he is confronted with the meaninglessness of life, and so experiences passionately the absurdity of existence, drawing him dangerously close to nihilism. The "desert expanse of the sea" and often turbulent waters proves too much for man and threaten to overwhelm him—he is in need of a still harbour in which to find sanctuary and rest (4/2). Only tragic art, Nietzsche argues, can provide such a harbour for modern man; for only it can complement science by providing metaphysical comfort in the face of the horror of existence exposed by our scientific knowledge. Tragedy, while acknowledging the terrible truth of existence, celebrates mortal life and makes it possible that, "in the briefest atom of [man's] life's course, he may encounter something holy that endlessly outweighs all his struggle and all his distress" (4/4).

In this harbour—a fictitious world elevated high above mankind, crafted by myth and sanctified through music—action takes on supremely meaningful significance: "while the spell lasts, we consider so much worth striving for that we ally ourselves with the hero when he prefers to die rather than to renounce it." Art presents simplified renditions of the struggles of life. These simplifications do not offer man an opportunity through which he can escape his reality and numb his suffering (as does the present-day theatre), but are abbreviations "of the endlessly complex calculus of human action and desire." It acknowledges man's suffering, but in recognizing this suffering, it offers man "a shorter solution of the riddle of life." Modern man needs these simple appearances: as the world grows more complex and our knowledge of the natural world, history, and foreign cultures accumulates, the individual, unable to digest this knowledge, is overwhelmed. He is unable to make sense of the world or see any larger significance to his own existence. Thus, tension arises between man's "general knowledge of things" and his individual "spiritual-moral capacities" to cope with the world. Art does not dissipate this tension, but ensures that man can live strongly within it: "[a]rt exists *so that the bow shall not break*" (4/3).

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[69] Nietzsche, *UD*, 10. Lampert argues in *Nietzsche and Modern Times* that "this very image of the 'open sea' comes to define Zarathustra and Nietzsche himself." Whereas in *Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, Nietzsche identifies man's inability to live without horizons, and thus his need to forget, Lampert argues that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is:

> a call to remembering, a genealogy open to the whole of natural history and holding it in memory. Nihilism—not Nietzsche's thought—is forgetful, 'unfaithful to its memories, it lets them fall, lose their leaves' (*WP* 21). Nietzsche's later work sets a task for which there is no precedent and against which precedent argues: a society founded on the deadly truths about origins and ends. (294-5)

Tragedy, that powerful saving sorceress, serves man in a variety of ways: it gathers the dispersed threads and reties the Gordian knot, thereby restoring unity and coherence to the world through its simplifying symbolisms; it organises the knowledge that threatens to overwhelm man, and saves him by producing a manageable summary understanding of the world; and it heals man's suffering and redeems existence by dissolving the gulfs between men as they commonly share in the passion of the tragic hero. Significantly, tragic art saves man from the nausea that stems from an awareness of the true nature of existence and the consequent fate of Hamlet:

> [It] alone knows how to turn these nauseous thoughts about the horror or absurdity of existence into notions with which one can live: these are the *sublime* as the artistic taming of the horrible, and the *comic* as the artistic discharge of the nausea of absurdity.[70]

Having experienced the heights of tragedy, man, returning to everyday reality, looks on the world with new eyes. His spirit having been refreshed, he is genuinely re-created, and his sense of justice provoked; he is no longer lethargic or resigned, and he develops a taste for genuine culture. Thus, he is roused out of his former despondency; "incited to a public declaration and to public indignation," he is stirred to action (4/2).

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[70] Nietzsche, *BT*, 7.

Regarding the role of art in human life, Nietzsche clarifies that "[a]rt is, to be sure, no instructor or educator in direct action…the objectives for which the tragic hero strives are not without further ado the things worth striving for *per se*." One might say, art educates in 'right feeling.'[71] Through tragedy one learns "to take delight in the rhythm of the grand passion and in its victim," and in the process, boldly confronts reality and affirms life (4/3). By consecrating the individual to something higher than himself, tragedy allows man "to recognize in [his] struggles something sublime and significant" and to be "free of the terrible anxiety which death and time evoke in the individual" (4/3, 4/4). Art also bestows on our transitory existence a sense of the eternal and suprahistorical, that irrepressible life is at the bottom of all things. Despite the coming and going of individuals, nations and species, there is something that transcends the realm of becoming, something "holy that endlessly outweighs all [man's] struggle and all [man's] distress." To feel this, Nietzsche declares, "is what it means to have a *sense for the tragic*" (4/4).

Lampert points out that "the knowledge made public property by modern science gives this sense for the tragic a precise focus."[72] Science confirms Socrates' claim that all things decay, revealing that nothing is permanent and that all things created are eventually destroyed—even the entire human species is subject to this fate. Thus, Nietzsche exclaims,

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[71] This is discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis.

[72] Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*, 296.

> And if the whole of humanity is destined to die out—and who dares doubt that?—so the goal is set for it that is its supreme task, so to grow together in one and in common that it sets out as a whole to meet its coming demise with a sense for the tragic.[73]

This is the highest demand of art: to ennoble mankind, making him strong enough to face any prospect however daunting—even the eventual extinction of his species; not to renounce life in the face of this horrific reality, but to recognise something sublime and significant, something beautiful and holy, in that man, having come into being, must pass away. The saddest thing of all, Nietzsche insists, would not be the extinction of the species, but the prospect of mankind's complete loss of the sense for the tragic. Man cannot turn back to science or the old religion; his one and only hope, his only "guarantee for the future of humanity" is "his *retention of the sense for the tragic*." Attenuated though it has become, mankind has not yet lost this sense. Despite the death of Greek tragedy, it still lingers.[74] We moderns have cause to rejoice, however, for at Bayreuth tragedy is reborn and thus the sense for it strengthened. There is "no more rapturous joy," Nietzsche concludes, than this: "For this joy is altogether universal and suprapersonal, the rejoicing of mankind at the guarantee of the unity and continuance of the human as such" (4/4).

The greatness of Bayreuth rests in the art performed at the festival. However, the festival at Bayreuth is not limited to an artistic phenomenon. "To us," Nietzsche proclaims, "Bayreuth signifies the morning consecration on the day of battle" (4/3). The battle is against "the rampant aggression of contemporary bogus culture;" the enemy being "those 'cultivated people' for whom the word 'Bayreuth' signifies one of their most shattering defeats" (4/2). The established theatre serves to amuse and distract man; it is not concerned with the world outside itself. At the Bayreuth festival, however, the tragic drama depicts "the struggle of the individual against everything that opposes him as apparently invincible necessity, with power, law, tradition, compact and the whole prevailing order of things" (4/3). This theatre does not proclaim 'art for art's sake' or 'art for entertainment's sake,' but 'art for *life's* sake.' In the moments of quiet before the battle, tragic art lifts man up, consecrating him to something higher, thus enabling him to endure life's suffering and energizing him to act. Man returns to his cave elevated and refreshed, prepared for action.

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[73] I have used Laurence Lampert's translation of this sentence, which is omitted from the Hollingdale translation of *Wagner in Bayreuth*. Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*, 296-7; Lampert, *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche*, 182.

[74] Cf. Nietzsche, *BT*, 11.

CHAPTER FIVE: SECTIONS 5, 6 & 7

OVERVIEW OF SECTIONS 5, 6 & 7

Beginning in section 5 and culminating in section 7, Nietzsche leads the reader through an account of modern man's need for music and 'true' art—art free of the corruption and falseness of modern culture, which fulfills man's highest spiritual needs.[1] Over the course of these next three sections, Nietzsche reeducates the reader on the significance of art and its role in human life—he tears down our false opinions, criticises the established arts of modernity, and points to a higher, truer art—a tragic art for modern men. Through both subtle and overt references to the most famous image in philosophic literature—Plato's cave—Nietzsche leads the reader through his own version of the cave allegory: the Nietzschean cave is an image of art and its liberation, centering on the role of music.[2] In Plato's version (an image of liberal education), the philosopher, having liberated his soul from the cave of ordinary political life, is the highest man. Nietzsche does not challenge the Platonic view, but gives a complementary account of the artist. The highest artist is the man who, having been liberated from the cave of his own time and become innocent himself, liberates art from its fetters. The artist returns to the cave with a new 'light'—art informed by wisdom and the sublime task of tragedy—to redeem mankind. Nietzsche identifies Wagner as such a liberator of art. In section 7, Nietzsche returns to the importance of tragedy, a theme introduced in section 4, portraying Wagner as the dithyrambic dramatist whereby tragedy is reborn into the modern world. Having thus prepared the reader, Nietzsche delves into a deeper examination of the relationship between the highest artist—the dithyrambic dramatist—and the cave.

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[1] Nietzsche means true in both the senses of genuine (as opposed to the false arts of the modern cave) and honest (confronts reality as exposed by modern science, offering no 'noble' lies as did Christianised Platonism).

[2] This is not to argue that Nietzsche's allusions to the cave always refer to the liberation of art. References to the Platonic cave pervade Nietzsche's corpus; thus, understanding Nietzsche's ultimate conception of the cave requires comprehensive consideration of his works.

Of note, sections 5 through 7 of *Wagner in Bayreuth* are all especially permeated with Platonic references. It seems that Nietzsche is progressively Platonizing the Wagnerian project. Thus, to understand Nietzsche's teaching on the idea of Bayreuth, one must understand these references and their significance.

SECTION 5

i. Overview: section 5

Having identified Wagner as a counter-Alexander in section 4, Nietzsche now turns to a closer examination of what this association entails. The key to Wagner's achievements, in this regard, is music; everything else—the poetry, drama, and theatrical experience—follows.[3] To comprehend the accomplishments of Wagner, and the contributions of his art to the establishment of a genuine culture, one must 'mark the music.' Nietzsche is particularly concerned with Wagner's ability to simplify the world by "master[ing] the tremendous abundance of an apparently chaotic wilderness and…bring[ing] together in unity that which was formerly thought to be set irreconcilably asunder" (5/1). As demonstrated by Nietzsche's descriptions of Wagner's operas, the composer's works are simplifications of complex human problems (11/4). Wagner achieved this, Nietzsche claims, by discovering a relationship between two things which heretofore seemed alien to one another: "between *music and life*, and likewise between *music and drama*." Notably, Wagner did not artificially "create or invent" these relationships, but "discovered" them as they exist in nature. Wagner's discovery of these relationships enabled him to subject "the life of the present and the past to the illumination of an insight strong enough to penetrate to uncommonly remote regions;" he thereby came to understand more about man and the world (5/1). Synthesising this information, Wagner was able to portray a simplified and coherent picture of the world as he understood it through his art, especially by means of music. If one follows the Nietzschean Wagner as he seeks to understand the relationships between music and life, and music and drama, much about the nature of the modern cave, and modern man and his existence is disclosed. This process is similar to Nietzsche's analysis of history—the excess is stripped away, similar things drawn together, the needs of modern man identified, and a simplified portrait produced.

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[3] Wagner argued against the predominance of music in opera for many years, holding that in a synthesis of the arts, all the arts should be treated equally. Wagner published this view of opera, what he called "gesamtkunstwerk" (total artwork) in *The Artwork of the Future*, and put his theory into practice in the composition of his opera *Rhinegold*. Wagner later abandoned this view—arguably after his encounter with the philosophy of Schopenhauer (particularly Schopenhauer's theory of music)—recognizing that while all the arts contributed to "gesamtkunstwerk," not all contributed equally: Wagner conceded the pre-eminence of music. Nietzsche agrees with Wagner's later view, arguing for the special status of music in opera in *Wagner in Bayreuth*. Magee, in *Aspects of Wagner*, provides a metaphor that nicely articulates the significance of music in opera with respect to the other arts, and the respective contributions of each art. This characterisation is in accord with Wagner's later view:

> To a well-prepared dish each ingredient is important down to the last pinch of salt. But this is not to say that each of the ingredients is of equal importance—the last pinch of salt is not as important as the meat. Exactly that sort of distinction needs to be made about a synthesis of the arts. (75)

ii. The 'problem of music'

Wagner, impressed by the exceptional quality of modern German music, asked "[w]hat does it signify…that precisely such an art as music should have arisen with such incomparable force in the life of modern man?"[4] By asking this question, Wagner demonstrates he did not take the existence of music for granted. Given the decadent environment of the modern age (which would seem to make the creation of great music problematic), Wagner expressed wonder that great music nonetheless came into being in present times, thus hinting that modern man is undeserving of this higher art. Nietzsche does not immediately respond to Wagner's question; rather, he leaves the answer open. At this point, Nietzsche is looking to the significance of the problem, not the answer. He expands on Wagner's question, emphasizing its relevance to all eras, and clarifying that it is not *necessary* to "have a low opinion of this life [though he obviously does] in order to perceive a problem here." Music is a universally mysterious, almost incomprehensible, aspect of human life, and bound to mystify almost anyone who gives the matter some thought. One simply has to consider,

> all the great forces pertaining to this life and pictur[e] to oneself an existence striving mightily upwards and struggling for *conscious freedom* and *independence of thought*—only then does music appear truly an enigma in this world.[5]

Nonetheless, the existence of great music in modern times is particularly puzzling. Given the generally debased condition of modern society, Nietzsche wonders how such music ever came to be at all in the present era: "Must one not say that music *could* not arise out of this age!" What, then, could possibly explain that music—especially music of such surpassing quality—*does* exist today? One possibility is modern music came to be as a matter of chance. Nietzsche, however, counters this supposition:

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[4] In the Hollingdale translation, this phrase is identified as a quotation from Wagner's 'Zukunftsmusik,' *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 7, p. 150.

[5] What Nietzsche means by this is not entirely clear. He may be pointing to the tension between Dionysian music and the Socratic quest for knowledge, as he discussed in *The Birth of Tragedy*, or he may be simply emphasizing the enigmatic nature of music.

> A single great artist might be a chance event, certainly; but the appearance of a series of great artists such as the history of modern music discloses—a series equaled only once before, in the age of the Greeks—makes one think it is not chance but necessity that rules here (5/1).[6]

At this point, Nietzsche does not offer any further explanation of what this ruling necessity might be—in other words, *how* music came into being—other than to identify that there was a force distinct from chance that gave rise to music. Instead, Nietzsche turns his attention to the 'problem of necessity;' he asks *why* it was necessary that music came into being in modernity. For an answer to this problem, he argues, one must look to Wagner (as Nietzsche directed the reader at the end of section 1). Nietzsche claims that Wagner's answer is a synthesis of his insights concerning the two heretofore misunderstood relationships: between music and life, and between music and drama.

First, Nietzsche claims, Wagner recognised that music is necessary today because language "is sick, and the oppression of this tremendous sickness weighs on the whole of human development." Originally, language functioned to express the "realm of strong feelings," thus allowing man to communicate his deepest feelings and experiences to his fellow men, enabling him both to understand other men and to be understood in return. Such communication, which overcomes his sense of physical isolation, is necessary to man's individual wellbeing and the formation of a true community. As discussed in chapter 4, mankind naturally suffers as a consequence of individuated existence. Traditionally, language enabled "suffering mankind to come to an understanding with one another over the simplest needs of life," and in doing so, to overcome the pain associated with individuation. As man evolved, however, language ascended from the realm of strong feeling "up to the highest rung of achievement possible to it so as to encompass the realm of thought." In the process, language lost its connection with the passionate nature of the soul, and took on a kind of independent existence wherein the meaning of words became solely a matter of mere convention, and, as such, hollow. Thus, while modern language can express complicated ideas—for example, in areas such as politics, history, metaphysics, theology, evolutionary biology, nuclear physics, astronomy, etcetera—it can no longer perform its most fundamental and important task: to express the depths of man's soul. Mankind has lost the ability to communicate the most important things: words no longer correspond to inner experiences. Thus, language—having taken on its formalised convention-based existence—no longer serves man, but rules him, tyrannizing him with universal concepts that cannot accurately reflect his unique experiences and feelings. Unable to express himself, man can neither understand his own soul, nor, consequently, the souls of his fellow men; he is alienated from both his inner self and the rest of mankind. Hence, Nietzsche concludes, added to mankind's natural suffering from individuation is suffering from convention—that is, from "mutual agreement as to words and actions [but] without a mutual agreement as to feelings" (5/2).

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[6] As Nietzsche points out, Wagner and his fellow Germans were the proud heirs of a rich musical heritage, including musical giants such as: Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750); Georg Frideric Händel (1685-1759); Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809); Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791); Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827); Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826); Franz Schubert (1797-1828); and a host of lesser, but still important composers.

Modern education is profoundly affected by this problem of language.[7] In part, due to the shortcomings of language, our education fails to educate the passions of man. Failing to grasp man's needs or understand man's feelings, modern education does not—

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[7] Nietzsche did not only negatively connect language and education. In a series of public lectures presented to the auditorium of the Museum at the University of Basel in the winter of 1872, Nietzsche identified language—more particularly, one's mother tongue—as "the object that is first of all and most near, in which true education begins…the naturally fruitful soil for all further educational exertions." Nietzsche, *On the Future of Our Education Institutions*, 52.

cannot—go "out to meet clear needs and feelings in an educative sense." Modern education, overlooking the passions, proceeds on dominantly intellectual grounds, "entangling the individual in the net of 'clear concepts' and teaching him to think correctly." This puts modern man, already suffering from his inability to communicate, in a more dire situation. Modern education is perverse, Nietzsche contends, for there is no "sense whatever in making of a man a being who thinks and concludes correctly if one has not first succeeded in making of him one who feels rightly" (5/2). Similarly, Nietzsche argues elsewhere, to educate man to feel correctly is the first step in the tremendous task of "educating a man to be a man."[8] Thus, Nietzsche raises the question of whether one *can* think correctly without first feeling correctly.[9] This concept of education is pregnant with political implications. Significantly, it identifies feeling as of chief importance with respect to how men think about, and then act in the world. The 'false feeling' of modern men (as Nietzsche soon demonstrates), throws into question the very foundation, and hence the quality, of most modern thinking.

To address the ills brought on by the decline of language, modern man needs a musical education. Music, an unspoken language void of both words *and* concepts, is able to communicate directly between the innermost regions of human souls. Unlike modern language, music can express the inner experience of man, literally giving voice to his feelings, and especially to his suffering.[10] Nietzsche associates the source of music with primordial nature, opposing it to all human convention (including language).[11] Thus, through music, man connects once again with nature, his fellow men, and his primordial self:

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[8] Nietzsche, *SE*, 2.

[9] In this, Nietzsche would agree with Aristotle, who argues at the beginning of *Nicomachean Ethics* that a man must have experienced virtue before he can try rationally to understand virtue. If he is to be good and virtuous, he must be first taught to feel correctly with respect to these things. (1094b28-1095a11)

[10] This is a complicated idea, as the discussion of music and its relationship to the soul touches on deep metaphysical questions. In an early fragmentary essay (1871), Nietzsche emphasises that while music can give voice to feelings, feelings are not the origin of music: "*the Will is the object of music but not the origin*

> Now when the music of our German masters resounds in the ears of mankind injured to this extent, what is it really that here becomes audible? Precisely this *right feeling*, the enemy of all convention, all artificial alienation and incomprehension between man and man: this music is a return to nature, while being at the same time the purification and transformation of nature.... (5/2)

Music, however, is more than a means of expressing the soul: it also shapes the soul. Different modes and rhythms stir different passions, which enables music to exercise and thereby strengthen certain feelings, while allowing others to languish. Consequently, music can tune and refine man's passions. Importantly, through this process man can 'organise the chaos' of feelings in his soul, impose an order on those feelings, and come

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of it, that is the Will in its very greatest universality, as the most original manifestation, under which is to be understood all Becoming." Nietzsche further explains:

> That, which we call *feeling*, is with regard to this Will already permeated and saturated with conscious and unconscious conceptions and is therefore no longer directly the object of music; it is unthinkable then that these feelings should be able to create music out of themselves. Take for instance the feelings of love, fear and hope: music can no longer do anything with them in a direct way, every one of them is already so filled with conceptions. On the contrary, these feelings can serve to symbolize music, as the lyric poet does who translates for himself into the simile-world of feelings that conceptually and metaphorically unapproachable realm of the Will, the proper content and object of music. The lyric poet resembles all those hearers of music who are conscious of an *effect of music on their emotions*; the distant and removed power of music appeals, with them, to an *intermediate realm* which gives to them as it were a foretaste, as symbolic preliminary conception of music proper, it appeals to the intermediate realm of the emotions. One might be permitted to say about them, with respect to the Will, the only object of music, that they bear the same relation to this Will, as the analogous morning-dream according to Schopenhauer's theory, bears to the dream proper. To all those, however, who are unable to get at music except with their emotions, is to be said, that they will ever remain in the entrance-hall, and will never have access to the sanctuary of music: which, as I said, emotion cannot show but only symbolise.

Nietzsche, 'On Music and Words,' in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, volume 2, edited by Oscar Levy, 35-36.

[11] As the reader will see, Nietzsche does not associate music solely with human nature, but with the entire natural order.

to understand himself.[12] Music, overcoming the limitations of language, provides the fundamental education in 'right feeling,' and thereby contributes to the cultivation of whole men. Moreover, when a community of people listen to music, and share in the passions and feelings it arouses, the gulfs between them shrink as they find grounds upon which they can relate to one another. This is not to argue that music does away with convention; men must still agree on the meaning of words to communicate common concerns grounded in their passions. What music can do is restore man's relationship with reality, thus bringing convention closer in line with nature. Music can also rehabilitate language: when words are set to music, the music enhances the communicability of the words, connecting them with the passions of the soul.[13] Through this process—that of augmenting words with music—words become more meaningful and language is rejuvenated.

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[12] In *Schopenhauer as Educator*, Nietzsche emphasises the importance of this process:

> The Greeks gradually learned *to organize the chaos* by following the Delphic teaching and thinking back to themselves, that is, to their real needs, and letting their pseudo-needs die out. Thus they again took possession of themselves.... (10)

[13] Wagner was especially gifted at this. In *Aspects of Wagner*, Magee describes, using Wagner's own illustration:

> If...he writes a line like *Liebe giebt Lust zum Leben* ('Love gives delight to living') the concepts involved are obviously congruent and therefore no change of key is called for. But if the line is *Liebe bringt Lust und Leid* ('Love brings delight and sorrow') then, since delight and sorrow are opposites, the music should modulate between them. What should happen is that the key in which the phrase begins on the world 'love' should remain the same through 'delight' and then change for the word 'sorrow'. The modulation must express the interrelationship of delight and sorrow in the state of love, and at the same time their difference; it must articulate their conditioning of each other. (This, said Wagner, was something words could not do, only music.) Now suppose the next line is *Doch in ihr Weh webt sie auch Wonnen* (which might be very freely translated: 'Yet even its pain gives us joy'). Then the key of 'sorrow' from the end of the previous line should be carried through as far as 'pain', because the emotional mood remains the same. But then the verb in this second line starts a shift of the mood back towards that of the first half of the previous line; therefore the music should begin to change key on 'gives', and on the world 'joy' should arrive back at the key of 'Love gives delight'. (10-11)

In agreement with the Platonic Socrates, Nietzsche emphasises the literally fundamental importance of a musical education, notably absent in modern society. In the words of Socrates, the "rearing in music is most sovereign" because

> rhythm and harmony most of all insinuate themselves into the inmost part of the soul and most vigorously lay hold of it in bringing grace with them; and they make a man graceful if he is correctly reared, if not, the opposite.[14]

As Socrates seeks to harmonise the souls of the guardian class in the City in Speech, the Nietzschean Wagner seeks to tune the souls of modern men, teaching them 'right feeling,' and ensuring the proper degree of tension and relaxation of spirit.[15] As

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[14] Plato, *Republic*, 401d-e.

[15] In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates also discusses the importance of the right amount of tension. Addressing Glaucon, he warns against too much music, which can cause the spirit to slacken too much:

> Then, when a man gives himself to music and lets the flute play and pour into his soul through his ears, as it were into a funnel—using those sweet, soft, wailing harmonies we were just speaking of—and spends his whole life humming and exulting in song, at first, whatever spiritedness he had, he softened like iron and made useful from having been useless and hard. But when he keeps at it without letting up and charms his spirit, he, as the next step, already begins to melt and liquefy his spirit, until he dissolves it completely and cuts out, as it were, the sinews from his soul and makes it 'a feeble warrior.'

On the other hand, however, an insufficient amount of music leads to a spirit that is too hard:

> such a man becomes a misologist and unmusical. He no longer makes any use of persuasion by means of speech but goes about everything with force and savageness, like a wild beast; and he lives ignorantly and awkwardly without rhythm or grace.

What is needed is a combination of music and gymnastics suited to the nature of the individual. Socrates concludes:

> Now I, for one, would assert that some god gave two arts to human beings for these two things, as it seems—music and gymnastic for the spirited and the philosophic—not for soul and body, except incidentally, but rather for these two. He did so in order that they might be harmonized with one another by being tuned to the proper degree of tension and relaxation. (411a-412a)

However, there are some important differences between the nature of the musical education that Nietzsche and Socrates endorse. Whereas Socrates advocates the music of Apollo to calm the passions, strengthen reason, and foster moderation, Nietzsche promotes the music of Dionysus—those passionate, overwhelming harmonies that flood men with emotion. In a letter to Rohde, Nietzsche praises Wagner for creating such music: "For music is just that and nothing else! And just that and nothing else is what I mean

Nietzsche stated at the end of section 4, this is *the* task of art: to allow man to live with the tension of spirit that arises from life. As an archer's bow requires the right amount of tension so that it neither breaks nor slackens to the point of uselessness, the soul of man requires a proper degree of tension in order to aim for high goals and achieve greatness.[16]

Wagner's second insight into the question of what music signifies in our time is that the "relationship between music and life is not only that of one kind of language to another kind of language;" it is also the relationship between "the perfect world of sound

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with the word 'music' when I describe Dionysian!" Fischer-Dieskau, 69-70. This Dionysian music, however, is similar to the panharmonic music banished from the City in Speech by Socrates.

In his book *All Shook Up: Music, Passion, and Politics*, Holloway comments on Nietzsche's disagreement with his ancient counterpart. Holloway argues that Nietzsche views real music as "characterized not by intelligible beauty but by 'emotional power,' and its purpose is not to strengthen reason by cultivating its attraction to beautiful order but rather to overwhelm reason's command of the soul." Nietzsche's disagreement with Socrates rests on a disagreement about human nature: "For Socrates man is fundamentally a rational being, while for Nietzsche he is a fundamentally passionate being" (100-101). This difference, however, should not be exaggerated, since for both Socrates and Nietzsche, the highest man is *philosophical*. Like Socrates, Nietzsche is concerned with beauty, intelligibility, and order, all of which, he argues (using reason and not overwhelming passion), are partially realised through music. Through music, nature is revealed, man's passions become intelligible, order is restored in man's soul, and one experiences beauty. Nietzsche also emphasises the subrational aspects of man's soul, which he seeks to awaken and subsequently educate. The issue, then, is the respective roles of passion and reason in philosophy—which is, after all, '*love* of wisdom.' The apparent difference between Socrates and Nietzsche may be due to historical circumstances. On the view that our culture is a Socratic culture, thus thoroughly permeated with and dominated by the Apollonian, Nietzsche recognised the need to stimulate the Dionysian in modern man. Thus, perhaps for political reasons more than philosophical, Nietzsche sets himself in opposition to Socrates on this issue.

[16] In the 'Preface' to *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche assesses the tension of the modern spirit, identifies attempts to slacken the bow, and addresses his fellow men who have enough tension to shoot for distant goals:

> the fight against Plato or, to speak more clearly and for 'the people,' the fight against the Christian-ecclesiastical pressure of millennia—for Christianity is Platonism for 'the people'—has created in Europe a magnificent tension of the spirit the like of which had never yet existed on earth: with so tense a bow we can now shoot for the most distant goals. To be sure, European man experiences this tension as need and distress; twice already attempts have been made in the grand style to unbend the bow—once by means of Jesuitism, the second time by means of the democratic enlightenment which, with the aid of freedom of the press and newspaper-reading, might indeed bring it about that the spirit would no longer experience itself so easily as a 'need'...But we who are neither Jesuits nor democrats, nor even German enough, we *good Europeans* and free, *very* free spirits—we still feel it, the whole need of the spirit and the whole tension of its bow. And perhaps also the arrow, the task, and—who knows?—the *goal*—

and the totality of the world of sight" (5/3). This second relationship corresponds to the relationships between content and form, and between music and drama. Juxtaposing these relationships between music and life, and between music and drama, Nietzsche subtly suggests that there is a third relationship: drama and life. In the first instance, drama is limited to the theatrical stage. However, Wagner's insight into the relationship between music and drama can be extended to the world stage, thus bearing on life. The reader is therefore led to consider not only the relationship between music and action on stage, but also the relationship between music and how men appear and act in the world. A parallel turn in the discussion may be found in Plato's *Republic*: having gone through the musical education of the warrior class, Socrates turns to a gymnastic education akin to music.[17]

Looking to modern man's visible appearance in the world, Nietzsche judges that he is a 'sight to be seen,' not heard. On first glance, the outward form of modern man is eye-catching and appealing. Comparing him "with the phenomena of life of earlier times," however, reveals that his pleasing appearance is superficial, and thus deceptive; modern man is only a shell of a being. Nietzsche describes the existence of modern man through the lens of earlier times:

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[17] As discussed above, music is of fundamental importance to how men live and act in the world. However, a musical education alone does not suffice in making a man *a man*; modern man—like all men—is also in need of a rigorous gymnastic education. But as in the education established by Socrates in his City in Speech, it must be a gymnastic that is akin to music; both educational components aim at producing a healthy, harmonious soul. For, as Socrates teaches, "a good soul by its own virtue makes the body as good as it can be." Plato, *Republic*, 404b, 403d; cf. 408d-e.

While Nietzsche has been progressively 'Platonizing' the Wagnerian project, there is an apparent strain at this point. The term 'music' for Socrates already *includes* drama, all poetry, dance, and even history and astronomy, whereas 'gymnastics' directly involves the body. The strain may merely be due to the fact that Nietzsche is forcing his account into Socrates' mold for rhetorical purposes, or there may be a deeper philosophic reason.

> [it] exhibits an unspeakable poverty and exhaustion, despite the unspeakable gaudiness which can give pleasure only to the most superficial glance. If one looks a little more closely and analyses the impression made by this vigorously agitated play of colours, does the whole not appear as the glitter and sparkle of countless little stones and fragments borrowed from earlier cultures? Is everything here not inappropriate pomp, imitated activity, presumptuous superficiality?[18]

In the past—in a 'state of nature'—the inner condition of a man's soul was of fundamental concern. Man's internal self dictated his outer appearances and way of life; his external self—including his arts, customs, religion, and political life—were all a reflection of his character. That is to say, man's form was "shape necessitated by content." This congruency resulted in a unified and coherent self. On a societal level, this unity between form and content is at the root of all genuine culture. Sparta was one such society—every aspect of Spartan life, both internal and external, was congruent and unified with the whole. Such coherence and unity is the foundation of a wholesome environment: bounded by fitting horizons, men flourish and their potential is developed. Modern man, to the contrary, overwhelmed by aspects foreign to his character and native way of life, is lost in an unbounded existence; lacking genuine culture, he is but a pale reflection of the vigorous men of times past. Not only is form given priority in modern society, but modern man is dangerously close to lacking any substantive content whatsoever. Consequently, not only is he spiritually inferior to former ages, but he suffers a spiritual sickness. Stripped of his multicoloured coat, modern man is marked by "hoary impotence, nagging discontent, industrious boredom, [and] dishonourable wretchedness!" (5/3). Feeling spiritually unwell, and perhaps subconsciously ashamed of his vulgarity, modern man seeks to conceal himself and hide from his reality. To make life more bearable, modern man uses alien art to contrive a pleasing appearance and usurps the wisdom of past ages to cover up his ignorance. Above all, he intentionally 'misunderstands' others in order that he too will be misunderstood and his superficiality thus remain unquestioned.

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[18] Nietzsche's description here of our regime, and later his use of the image of a cloak, again calls to mind Socrates' description of the democratic regime: "It is probably the fairest [aesthetically] of the regimes...[j]ust like the many-coloured cloak...." Plato, *Republic*, 557c.

Modern man's second need for music arises from his superficial appearance and vulgar content. Transforming souls, music necessarily changes how men appear and act in the world. In a world dominated by form and marked by mutually convenient misunderstanding, the music of the German masters fills individual men with fiery content that swells up from the depths of nature. Through souls filled with such music, the audible world "reaches out to its corresponding necessary [visible] shape in the world." Moreover, when a community of men are filled and unified by music, the seed of genuine culture is planted. This is the significance of Wagner's music to the modern world of form and action:

> Help me, [Wagner] cries to all who can hear, help me to discover that culture whose existence my music, as the rediscovered language of true feeling, prophesies; reflect that the soul of music now wants to create for itself a body, that it seeks its path through all of you to visibility in movement, deed, structure and morality!

Thus, hope for cultural renewal rests with music. Nietzsche's claim stands in stark contrast with the popular belief of the Germany of his day—a belief that remains prevalent today. It was believed that a unified German culture would be created and maintained through politics. In other words, the state (not music), was to be the foundation of culture: nationalism would establish a unified Germany, and a unified Germany would give birth to a unified culture. Nietzsche shuns conventional politics as the solution to man's spiritual and cultural needs, and looks to music as the cultural foundation of the state. Music, bringing men together in harmony and facilitating the sharing of passions, would unify citizens, shape their way of life, and influence how they act in the world in a manner conventional politics alone cannot. Only then, when music founds the state, will man even have an "inkling of gymnastics in the Greek and Wagnerian sense of the word" (5/5).

iii. An artistic revolution

The deprivation of modern culture (particularly, as identified by Nietzsche in section 5, the exhaustion of language, the absence of musical education, and the spiritual poverty and shallowness of modern man) contributes to the inability of the artists of modernity to create great, life-serving art. The problem is not that our artists lack talent, but that modern culture does not provide a fertile environment to nurture and inspire the necessary spiritual qualities in artists; neither can it inspire, nor provide much of value to imitate. The art produced in modernity is a reflection of the times: largely impoverished, unimaginative, shallow, and unsatisfying.[19] Unlike the mysterious case of music, the other arts have languished. Nietzsche's example of the plastic artists illustrates this phenomenon:

> it does not matter how much talent they have, it will come either too late or too soon and in any case at the wrong time, for it is superfluous and ineffective, since the perfect and highest products of former ages, the pattern for our contemporary artists, are themselves superfluous and almost ineffective and hardly capable now of setting one stone upon another. If they behold within themselves no new figures before them but only the old figures

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[19] While Nietzsche issues such sweeping statements, some exceptions are inevitably to be found. However, these exceptions are rarely popular—limited to a few of more cultivated tastes—and if they are popular, it is usually not for the right reasons. Thus, the exceptions prove the rule.

> behind them, then they may serve history but they cannot serve life, and they are dead while they are still breathing....

The situation is similar for the written arts: no great writers can be expected to "emerge from our exhausted and colourless languages." It bears emphasizing again, however, that Nietzsche is not a romantic antiquarian; his criticisms of the art of modernity do not lead him simply to seek a return to the past. He is concerned with reaching out to an art for the future—an art that speaks to the times and serves *life*. However, given the dialectical relationship between art and culture, creating such art seems an insurmountable problem. One is left wondering how it would ever be possible to get out of our current situation. What is fundamental to the creation of such art, Nietzsche argues, is music; it is a wellspring of life, energy, true passion, and inspiration. Only through music can the artist of modernity transcend the limitations of our cave, thus "conduct[ing the plastic artists] into a new visible world" of symbolic forms, and offering an energetic and colourful, therefore meaningful, language to those with the talent to become great writers (5/5).[20] With new art, the ground will be tilled for a new culture.

In the concluding paragraph of section 5, Nietzsche confronts us with the practical implications of the degradation of the art of modernity. This is not solely a matter for academics and art enthusiasts; the effects of this decay are far reaching, impacting the daily lives of all members of society. Nietzsche—the cultural observer who moves through time, comparing modern man to the peak of humanity, the Greeks—peers out on a busy street of a modern city: "[as I] behold their gloomy or harried expressions," he reflects, "I tell myself repeatedly that they must be feeling unwell." Art, despite its power to save man, is instead put into the 'service' (disservice, actually) of these gloomy people: contemporary art "exists merely so that they shall feel even more unwell, even gloomier and more senseless, or even more harried and more greedy" (5/6). However, the spirit of music—especially that of Wagner, who is the peak of the German tradition—breaks through and acquaints man with the higher task of art. This higher task serves mankind in many ways: it overcomes 'false feeling' by educating men in 'right feeling;' it allows men to communicate directly with each other, thus express their suffering and find solace; it brings men closer together through a deeper understanding of themselves, thereby forming community; it transforms men's souls and even their bodies (with respect to how they appear and act in the world); and it changes men's perspective on, and posture towards the world.[21]

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[20] The possibilities that Nietzsche envisioned with respect to Wagner's influence on the arts proved to be true with time. In fact, it is difficult to over estimate Wagner's contributions to modern music, theatre, literature, and even painting. In *Aspects of Wagner*, Magee lists some of the artists—composers, writers, painters—that Wagner influenced. To name but a few: T.S. Eliot, Edouard Dujardin, James Joyce, Charles Baudelaire, Émile Zola, Colette, Paul Cézanne, Pierre Renoir, Claude Debussy, Charles Camille Saint-Saëns, Charles François Gounod, Georges Bizet, Marcel Proust, Thomas Mann, George Bernard Shaw, Bulwer Lytton, George Moore, Charles Morgan, Oscar Wilde, Ford Madox Ford, Arnold Bennett, Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster, Willa Cather, D.H. Lawrence, Anton Dvořák, Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky, Gustav Mahler, Dimitri Shostakovich, Richard Strauss, Sir Edward Elgar, Anton Bruckner, Jean Sibelius, Arnold Schoenberg, Frederick Delius, Gustav Holst, and Bela Bartók. (47-56).

Despite the transformative power of music, there remains an enormous political obstacle to any widespread effect. "If music is one day to move *many* men to piety for music," Nietzsche announces, "and to acquaint them with its *highest* objectives, an end must first be made to all pleasure-seeking traffic with so sacred an art" (emphasis added). As long as art is sought merely for pleasure, it will be limited by the transitory tastes of the many and reduced to paltry entertainment, thereby striped of its higher aims. This is especially problematic in the case of theatre, which is inherently a "mass art par excellence."[22] The less pernicious forms of theatrical entertainment are amusing, offering a moment of mindless repose from daily life. But unlike higher forms of art—the peak of which is tragedy—the repose offered by our common theatres is not a refreshing interval of quiet that prepares man to act in the world and enables him to endure life's suffering. Art as entertainment serves only to distract: it offers men an oversimplified, distorted view of life (hence sheltering them from the painful realities of existence), temporarily numbs their suffering, and floods them with false images and expectations of life.[23] Entertaining art, therefore, ushers men from the theatre back into the world no better (if not worse) for having attended. Nor do men benefit from taking the art of modernity more seriously. In fact, doing so is detrimental to their souls:

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[21] Of this power of music, Nietzsche wrote to Peter Gast on 4 January 1889: "Sing me a new song: the world is transfigured and all the heavens are full of joy." Kaufman, *The Portable Nietzsche*, 685.

> one demands of [art] the engendering of hunger and desire and discovers its task to lie precisely in this artificially engendered excitement. As though one feared perishing through one's own self-disgust and dullness, one calls up every evil demon so as to be driven like a deer by these hunters: one thirsts for suffering, anger, passion, sudden terror, breathless tension, and calls upon the artist as the one who can conjure up this spectral chase. (5/5)

Having attempted to numb ourselves to the reality of existence, we moderns have suppressed the natural spiritual hunger within our souls, and hence suffer from a poverty of feeling. In former times, men sought art to satisfy true spiritual needs. Modern man, however, emotionally impoverished and obtuse, demands the artist compensate for his deficiencies by creating the feeling of hunger in order that he may feel more human, albeit artificially so.[24] Pandering to our perverted needs (and thus failing to meet our true needs), the art of modernity provides only shallow, short-lived fulfillment, leaving us eternally hungry. According to Nietzsche's censure in section 8, modern theatre "cram[s] a stomach never satisfied," rather than serves the more important task of "feeding a hungry one" (8/6). Never truly satiated, we desire still more of this theatrical cotton candy, and thus return to the artist with increasing demands.

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[22] Nietzsche, 'Postscript,' *CW*.

[23] As Nietzsche contends in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, "the objective of all human arrangements is through distracting one's thoughts to cease *to be aware* of life;" for to be aware of life is "to suffer from life" (4).

For theatre to have its highest and purest outcome, thus effecting innovations throughout society and transforming modern man, it is not enough to reform the arts. A revolution is needed: the very foundation of the arts must be destroyed, opening the way for a new art, and the tastes and expectations of the recipients of this art must be transformed. This requires undermining all support for the established arts and doing battle with the so-called 'friend of art.' Whereas in section 4 Nietzsche reassured the reader that a change in the theatre would effect change in modern men and throughout society, art can only "effec[t] innovations everywhere" if the spectators are "prepared and dedicated," as Nietzsche describes, and art is pursued for the highest reasons (4/2). Anything short of these conditions, art will be subverted to the perverse needs of society and will fail to have any revolutionary effect. In order to meet these conditions, Nietzsche, the *true* friend of art, outlines the necessary action:

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[24] Nietzsche elaborates on the distinction between these two uses of art in 'We Antipodes,' *Nietzsche contra Wagner*:

> Every art, every philosophy, may be considered a remedy and aid in the service of either growing or declining life: it always presupposes suffering and sufferers. But there are two kinds of sufferers: first, those who suffer from the *overfullness* of life and want a Dionysian art as well as a tragic insight and outlook on life—and then those who suffer from the *impoverishment* of life and demand of art and philosophy, calm, stillness, smooth seas, or, on the other hand, frenzy, convulsion, and anesthesia. Revenge against life itself—the most voluptuous kind of frenzy for those so impoverished!

> the foundation upon which our artistic entertainments, theatre, museums, concert societies rest, namely the aforesaid 'friend of art', must be placed under an interdict; the public judgment which lays such peculiar stress on cultivating this species of friendship for art must be beaten from the field by a better judgment. In the meantime we must count even the *declared enemy of art* as a real and useful ally, since that of which he has declared himself an enemy is precisely art as the 'friend of art' understands it: for he knows no other! Let him by all means call the friend of art to account for the senseless squandering of money on the construction of his theatres and public monuments, the engagement of his 'celebrated' singers and actors, the maintenance of his wholly unproductive art-schools and picture-galleries: not to speak of all the effort, time and money thrown away in every household on instruction in supposed 'artistic pursuits'. (5/5)

Nietzsche's prescription for art in modernity is similar to his prescription for philosophy, as outlined in *Schopenhauer as Educator*. In the earlier *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche argues that to save true philosophy from the harmful effects of pseudo-thinkers,

> philosophy should be deprived of any kind of official or academic recognition and that state and academy be relieved of the task, which they cannot encompass of distinguishing between real and apparent philosophy.[25]

Only then, left to their own means and free of "all prospect of place and position within the bourgeois profession," the 'false philosophers' will easily be gotten rid of, and the 'true philosophers' freed from the interests of the state.[26] Likewise, with respect to art, Nietzsche does not seek to reform the current institutions, but seeks to deny them (by ceasing to support them), thus allowing the current arts to die out and opening up a space for new art to emerge.

On the limitations of reformation, Nietzsche agrees in principle with Rousseau: once a people's morals or manners have degenerated, all is lost and hopeless for they cannot be restored.[27] Rousseau argues that theatre cannot be looked to as a means to improve morals or manners. These same limitations also prevent theatre from being a means of revolutionizing art:

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[25] Nietzsche, *SE*, 8.

[26] Ibid.

> the principal object is to please; and provided that the people enjoy themselves, this object is sufficiently attained. This alone will always prevent our being able to give these sorts of [theatrical] institutions all the advantage they are susceptible of; and it is a gross self-deception to form an idea of perfection for them that could not be put into practice without putting off those whom one wants to instruct…

Considering human nature and politics, Rousseau soberly concludes,

> Let no one then attribute to the theatre the power to change sentiments of morals [manners], which it can only follow and embellish.[28]

Rousseau's argument with respect to the theatre can be extended to all the arts, insofar as the arts are based on pleasure and corrupted by man's desire for entertainment. Thus, most of contemporary art cannot be saved; it must be excised. As one prunes a plant to improve its shape and growth, and to ensure the health of the entire plant, so must one prune the arts to open the way for a new, healthy art to grow and establish itself.

To most 'cultured' people of our present day, Nietzsche's battle plan will appear extreme; many are sure to react with repulsion, seeing him as the enemy of art.[29] This is not surprising. As Nietzsche explains in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, when a man gets angry at the existing order of things and "*takes upon himself the suffering involved in being truthful*," to others,

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[27] Rousseau, 'Chapter Seven: Of Censorship,' *The Social Contract*.

[28] Rousseau, *Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre*, 18, 19. After the death of Wagner, Nietzsche strongly expressed the limitations of the theatre, at the same time incriminating Wagner for his participation in this institution:

> What is the theatre to me? What, the convulsions of his 'moral' ecstasies which give the people—and who is not 'people'?—satisfaction? What, the whole gesture hocus-pocus of the actor? It is plain that I am essentially anti-theatrical: confronted with the theatre, this mass art par excellence, I feel that profound scorn at the bottom of my soul which every artist today feels. *Success* in the theatre—with that one drops in my respect forever; *failure*—I prick up my ears and begin to respect.

Nietzsche, 'Where I Offer Objections,' *NCW*.

> This utterance of truth seems…a discharge of malice, for they regard the conservation of their inadequacies and humbug as a human duty and think that one who disrupts their child's play in this way must be wicked.[30]

Nietzsche would not deny that his plan is ruthless; however, it is not gratuitously cruel. Or, in Machiavellian terms, it is cruelty "well used."[31] Such action is necessary, given the advanced stage of our culture's decadence. The same reasoning may be applied here as Nietzsche later used to describe his task in *Beyond Good and Evil*: the "no-saying" part is necessary to prepare the way for the "yes-saying."[32] Before one jumps to conclusions, it is important to note that Nietzsche does not endorse the destruction of the art of modernity *per se*. We need an art created *by* men of today *for* men of today. In order to create art that speaks to the times, one needs talent. Artists are not to be taken for granted, as talent cannot simply be willed into existence. Wagner is one such artist, albeit of extraordinary greatness and 'Alexandrian' stature. However, talent alone is not enough: if artists of modernity are to achieve the highest potential of their art, the current foundation of the arts must be denied. For example, the idea encompassed by the festival at Bayreuth will not be realised if the spectators attend for the sake of mindless entertainment. Nietzsche is seeking to change the very way we approach and experience art. This requires drastic action.

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[29] This raises the difficulty, discussed by Polemarchus and Socrates, of distinguishing one's true friends from one's enemies. Plato, *Republic*, 334b-335a.

[30] Nietzsche, *SE*, 4.

[31] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 'Chapter VIII,' 37.

[32] Nietzsche, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'Beyond Good and Evil,'' *EH*, 1.

SECTION 6

i. Overview: section 6

Section 6 continues Nietzsche's examination and diagnosis of modern culture. Having examined how the art of modernity—"either nothing or something malign"—debases society and renders men "the helpless slaves of false feeling," Nietzsche now considers the other side of the dialectic: how society, perverse and vulgar, corrupts art (5/5, 5/6). Nietzsche is reinforcing the broad scope of the problem: not only is the art of modernity decadent, but, bearing in mind the image of the Gordian knot, so is every thread of modern society. In effect, these threads exist in a mutually debasing relationship. Thus, as Nietzsche argued in section 4, given the interconnected nature of all elements of life, to change one thread would effect changes throughout the whole (4/2). Yet, as in the case of art, there are limits to the extent to which one can change a single thread while it remains a part of the same decadent environment. In section 6, Nietzsche tackles this problem with the aid of Plato: Nietzsche retells the story of the cave, but as an allegory of art.[33] Continuing the process begun at the end of section 5, Nietzsche examines the nature of life in the modern cave, emphasizing how art is debased by the pervasive decadence of the cave. To save art, Nietzsche looks to the man who, having successfully escaped the cave, works to free art from its fetters. Out of love, this man returns to the cave, bringing "light"—a new redeemed art—to the prisoners. The end of section 6 returns to the question posed by Wagner at the beginning of section 5: "[w]hat does it signify…that precisely such an art as music should have arisen with such incomparable force in the life of modern man?" (5/1). The reader, his eyes having been opened to the vulgarity of both modern life and art, and having glimpsed what true art would be, is now guided by Nietzsche through a consideration of *how* music—"the most enigmatic thing under the sun"—came into being in modernity (6/6).

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[33] Socrates tells the allegory of the cave at the beginning of Book VII of Plato's *Republic* (514a-519e).

ii. Life in the modern cave

Nietzsche's initial diagnosis of our cave is that "the sensibilities of our age have become" perverse. As prisoners of the modern cave, despite our vast studies in history and anthropology, we lack genuine knowledge of other caves and the world outside our cave—the world that *is*. Therefore, knowing no other reality with which radically to compare ourselves, we have "no perception of [our] perversity" (6/1).[34] Both to support his claim and to open our eyes to our condition, Nietzsche offers two examples of our pathology. Comparing these examples to an earlier golden age, Nietzsche demonstrates that things *have* been different, and that our perversions are very much alterable. Addressing this "most vital of questions" of philosophy, Nietzsche identifies the philosophic task ahead: to correct these alterable perversions in modern man (3/4). He begins this process by drawing the reader's attention to the degeneration of our cave, and then outlining a plan of action for a man worthy of the task. Ultimately, Nietzsche is setting forth his own life work.

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[34] Despite enormous energies spent researching and studying history and anthropology, we have but a superficial acquaintance with other caves. There are two main reasons for this. One, our knowledge of other caves has no cultural impact on us—it has added to our assorted collection of knowledge and trivia, but has not impacted on how we live as individuals or a society. Two, our studies do not fundamentally challenge our cave as we rely on our own standards to judge, covertly or overtly treating our cave as the highest reality. Thus, we are not forced to compare ourselves against a *truly* higher reality. Nietzsche provides us terms of comparison in his essay.

Nietzsche's first example of our perversion is the elevated rank and role in society of those who deal with money as a business. This perversion has increased in degree to the point that money-dealers have come to rule the souls of men. Nietzsche is no idealist: he does not deny the importance of money-dealers in society. As the intestines have a necessary physiological role, money-dealers have a necessary, albeit lowly, societal role—they cannot simply be done away with. As it would be a perversion to elevate the business of the intestines above that of the mind, it is a perversion to honour the money-makers as the ruling part of society; as there is a physiological hierarchy, there is an appropriate societal hierarchy. Nietzsche's second example is our concern with matters of the day over matters of eternity. In the past, people directed contemplation outside the cave, considering existence and eternal questions of what *is*. Today, however, men are preoccupied with the ever changing, yet mundane matters of the cave; accordingly, they turn their gaze downwards. As Nietzsche describes in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, modern men focus on the "lying puppet-play" of "eternal becoming."[35] Now, the only kind of seriousness that remains in the modern soul is "that directed towards the news brought by the newspapers or the telegraph"—and, a future reader might add, satellite television and the internet. Giving precedence to the present day over timeless matters stems, in part, from Nietzsche's first example: the concerns of modern men have been reduced to the moment, "so as to profit from it, [and] to assess its value as quickly as possible!" (6/1). Thus, as modern man elevates the intestines in rank, thereby subjecting the mind to base business, he supplants eternal questions of being with transitory questions of profit.

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[35] Nietzsche, *SE*, 4.

Although Nietzsche leaves unspecified how the perversities of modern sensibilities affect art, any reader today with open eyes will not find it difficult to see this for himself. Contemporary artists and purveyors of art are predominately concerned with making a profit—so-called 'art' has become a commercial enterprise. With such a perversion of interests, art no longer serves life, but is subjected to the ruling concern of modernity: money-making. Moreover, like the modern men it entertains and diverts, art has also lost its seriousness vis-à-vis life. As people's sentiments have changed, becoming preoccupied with the present moment, art too has changed its focus from the eternal to the ephemeral. Most artists, themselves a product of society, share this concern for the moment, which is reinforced by people's demands for novel entertainment—they do not want art that challenges them on timeless questions, but art that distracts them from such discomforting issues, along with their mundane cares. People do not want 'serious' art—art that takes on difficult questions which challenge their intellectual and spiritual energies; they demand mindless, pleasurable diversion—a means to escaping life and silencing their conscience. Even if an artist creates a higher form of art, it is bound to fail amongst modern men: to be successful (and thereby make a profit), art must pander to the tastes of the times. Having thus assessed the modern cave, one must conclude that so long as modern culture is decadent, art will face an uphill, and, more than likely, losing battle. Even the best of intentions cannot control how art is treated once released into the public domain. Thus, to redeem art, one must also redeem mankind.

Having opened our eyes to our perversions, thus helping the modern reader come to 'know himself,' Nietzsche abruptly shifts to what can be seen more readily. Returning to the issue of the appearance of modern man, Nietzsche argues:

> that this age is vulgar can be seen already, for it holds in honour that which former noble ages despised; and if it has appropriated to itself all that is valuable in the art and wisdom of the past and promenades around in this most opulent of all raiment, it shows an uncanny awareness of its vulgarity in that it employs this cloak not to keep itself warm, but only to disguise itself. The need to dissemble and to conceal itself seems more pressing than the need not to be cold.

Tacitly aware and ashamed of his vulgarity, modern man attempts to conceal his actual nature beneath a beautiful appearance and an "illusory reputation for wisdom." What he cannot hide with this cloak, he tries to defend: "Theories of the state, of the nation, of the economy, trade, justice—they all now have the character of a *preparatory apologia*" (6/1). The appearance of modern men, while pleasing to the eye, is not sufficient for man's wellbeing: his beautiful cloak fails to meet his need for warmth. In contrast, the beautiful dramatic artistry of the 'tragic Greeks,' which veiled the dreadful wisdom of Silenus, provided men comfort and warmth.[36] The issue at hand is the relationship between beauty and utility, which can often be in tension. Nietzsche is reminding the reader of this tension, and calling to our attention the fact that there are other goods beyond cosmetic beauty. Art and wisdom are not merely for the sake of appearances, but have an important, distinctly human use—as clothing keeps men physically warm, art and wisdom keep men spiritually warm. Modern men, however, sacrifice function for appearance.[37] Nietzsche is not denying the importance of beauty, but is emphasizing its proper relation to function.

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[36] Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 231.

Despite the attempts of modern man to dissemble and deny his reality, he cannot fully escape his conscience, which reminds him of the terrible truth of existence and leaves him with an odious feeling. Modern man, try as he may, cannot close himself off completely from truth revealed by science. Given the obliteration of the old horizons of the heretofore regnant Christianised Platonism, man can no longer appeal to religion for comfort. Thus, he is forced to face the dark abyss of a meaningless existence alone. Most men lack the spiritual strength to face this reality; hence, art is called in as an analgesic, its higher objectives subjected to the perverse needs of modern men:

> the task of modern art, too, suddenly becomes clear: stupefaction or delirium! To put to sleep or to intoxicate! To silence the conscience, by one means or the other! To help the modern soul to forget its feeling of guilt, not to help it to return to innocence! And this at least for moments at a time! To defend man against himself by compelling him to silence and to an inability to hear! (6/4)

Thus, with our heads down and our ears stopped, we hasten on with daily life, keeping busy in order to avoid pausing to think, and filling life with festive sounds of tinkling bells so as not to hear our conscience. The base function of the artist of modernity—to deafen man's ears and help him forget his suffering—is far removed from the task of the "true artist," who 'hears' a great deal and seeks to understand the world truthfully (3/1; cf. 1/4). While the art of modernity attempts to deny reality, allowing man to escape from himself and avoid difficult truths, the art of the 'true artist' embraces reality and communicates it to the rest of mankind, while simultaneously solacing man with beauty and seducing him to life, in order that he can courageously face reality. Truthful art is the only hope for modern man: now that science has lifted the veil of Platonism, once again the dreadful wisdom of Silenus is exposed; art *must* accord with this truth if it is to meet man's spiritual needs, and nurture men into a higher, nobler existence. Tragedy is this highest art—it ennobles and dignifies the world, and nurtures strength of soul and nobility in men so that they may live truthfully.[38]

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[37] King Lear's chastisement of his daughters nicely articulates this point:

> If only to go warm were gorgeous
> Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
> Which scarcely keeps thee warm.

Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 2.2.456-59.

Nietzsche condemns the modern task of art to deafen man as the "most shameful of tasks," and laments the "dreadful degradation of art" it bespeaks. Few men, however, recognise that the art of modernity is decadent, let alone understand the significance of this degradation. The reason for this ignorance is that most men have a 'modern soul'—meaning, a soul nurtured by the present age, thus shaped by its perversities—which keeps them firmly bounded within the walls of our cave. Such men lack taste or appreciation for higher art, having never been exposed to it, much less shaped by it. Modern culture has failed to nurture a sense for, and appreciation of, great things. Hence, these 'ordinary' men remain accepting of the status quo, despite their hardly concealed dissatisfaction. Like the prisoners of the Platonic cave, who, bound and fixed in place, stare passively at the wall and watch the passing shadows, modern men gaze contentedly into the "flickering and smoky fire of their art." Yet, Nietzsche argues, there are a few men who recognise this degradation of art. These men are discontented; they "find their souls filling to the brim with regret and pity: but also with a new mighty longing"—to liberate art from its modern fetters (6/4). One such man was introduced in section 5—he who fights against the established arts. The man we meet in section 6, however, has different qualities of soul, hence different duties vis-à-vis art. This man takes the higher path; he goes beyond rejecting the shadows on the wall—this merely destructive, 'no-saying' reaction—to "love, pity and assist," thereby creating a new redeemed art (5/5).

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[38] Lampert discusses the relationship between truth and art in *Nietzsche's Teaching*, 122-3.

iii. The saviour of art

In order to free art from the debased demands of the cave, one must first successfully escape the cave and become spiritually pure. "He who desired to liberate art, to restore its desecrated sanctity," Nietzsche cautions, "would first have to have liberated himself from the modern soul; only when innocent himself could he discover the innocence of art" (6/4). Having cleansed his soul in this manner—a double purification—a man of suitable mind and spirit can then consecrate himself to art. While much of this process begs to be explained, especially puzzling is the first step: how such a man will free himself from his fetters. To this question, Nietzsche has an answer: true music has such liberating powers. One must listen, as Nietzsche instructed in section 1: "be silent and be cleansed! be silent and be cleansed!" (1/4). Recalling the Platonic allegory, there are no sounds within the cave but the echoes of whatever is uttered by the puppeteers. Like the shadows, these sounds are mere imitations of actual things.[39] Now, imagine the true music of nature (which Nietzsche suggests is the music of the German masters) resounding in the cave. This great music breaks through the conventions of the cave, awakens man's slumbering soul, and cleanses him of 'false feeling;' it breaks man's spiritual fetters, freeing him to turn from the shadowy wall and be liberated from the cave. Not all the prisoners, however, will be thus affected.[40] As Nietzsche argues, one must be quiet to hear the true harmonies and allow such music to penetrate one's soul. It is not enough to read rational accounts of true music, for theoretical understanding is insufficient to revolutionise one's entire soul, causing it to turn in a new direction. One must experience the music fully, which requires a capable soul. The natural artist, however, has such a soul; thus music begins his process of liberation.

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[39] In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates asks an agreeing Glaucon: "And what if the prison also had an echo from the side facing them? Whenever one of the men passing by happens to utter a sound, do you suppose they would believe that anything other than the passing shadow was uttering the sound?...Then most certainly…such men would hold that the truth is nothing other than the shadows of artificial things." (515b-c)

With some reserve, Nietzsche explains that of the small number of men whose souls are liberated by music, not all will successfully escape from the cave. Such purification is limited to a few rare men of exceptional qualities. This is understandable, as the road out of the cave—according to both Socrates and Nietzsche—is a difficult one, fraught with many dangers and temptations (as Nietzsche has demonstrated in his accounts of the development of both Wagner and Schopenhauer). However, the artist does not journey out of the cave alone—he enjoys the prior understanding of the philosopher. Recalling the Platonic allegory of the cave, there are two ways in which men are freed from their fetters and escape from the cave: the first is he who frees himself; the second is he who is freed by the self-freed man. Similarly, the artist benefits from the philosopher's helping hand. Looking to the historical Wagner, his relationship to Arthur Schopenhauer nicely illustrates this point: not only did philosophy influence Wagner's artistic style, but also the content of his art.

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[40] Jessica's aversion to "sweet music" illustrates that the effects of music are not universal: "I am never merry when I hear sweet music." Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, 5.1.69.

Schopenhauer is recognised by many Wagner biographers for his tremendous impact on Wagner's life and art—an observation not lost on the historical Wagner. Schopenhauer's ideas were not foreign concepts accepted by Wagner, but helped the artist articulate his intuitions. In a letter to a friend, Wagner explains:

> I must confess to have arrived at a clear understanding of my own works of art through the help of another, who has provided me with the reasoned conceptions corresponding to my intuitive principles.[41]

Before his encounter with Schopenhauer, Wagner was heavily influenced by the thought of Ludwig Feuerbach. The impact of this thinker on Wagner is apparent in the story of the *Ring*, which is permeated with Feuerbach's idea of the liberation of mankind through love. While not openly referring to Feuerbach, Nietzsche argues in *The Case of Wagner* that original ending of the *Ring* was Feuerbachean in nature: "Siegfried and Brunhilde; the sacrament of love; the rise of the golden age; the twilight of the gods for the old morality—*all ill has been abolished.*" However, Nietzsche continues, something happened that caused Wagner to change his course: he "struck a reef....The reef was Schopenhauer's philosophy; Wagner was stranded on a *contrary* world view." Ashamed of his earlier optimism, Wagner embraced Schopenhauer's philosophy of pessimism and accordingly changed the ending of the *Ring*:

> Everything goes wrong, everything perishes, the new world is as bad as the old: the *nothing*, the Indian Circe beckons.
>
> Brunhilde was initially supposed to take her farewell with a song in honor of free love, putting off the world with the hope for a socialist utopia in which 'all turns out well'—but now gets something else to do. She has to study Schopenhauer first; she

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[41] Quoted in Magee, *Aspects of Wagner*, 77. Magee discusses this relationship between philosopher and artist at greater length in his book *The Tristan Chord*.

> has to transpose the fourth book of *The World as Will and Representation* into verse. *Wagner was redeemed.*[42]

In his autobiography, *My Life*, Wagner testifies that his encounter with Schopenhauer's book, *The World as Will and Idea*, marked a turning point in his life and art.[43] Schopenhauer influenced Wagner's understanding of the world. No longer was Wagner infected by optimism; he adopted the tragic view of the philosopher, which he then communicated in his art. As such, Wagner is an example of the relationship between the man of action and the man of thought: Wagner, as artist, was a practical actor who carried philosophy into the world of everyday people, communicating ideas through his art.

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[42] Nietzsche, *CW*, 4.

[43] It is worth including the relevant excerpt from *My Life*. Wagner testifies:

> whereas [Schopenhauer's] treatment of aesthetics pleased me immensely, particularly his surprising and significant conception of music, I was alarmed, as will be everyone in my frame of mind, by the moral principles with which he caps the work, for here annihilation of the will and compete self-abnegation are represented as the only true means of redemption from the constricting bonds of individuality in its dealings with the world. For those seeking in philosophy their justification for political and social agitation on behalf of the so-called 'free individual', there was no sustenance whatever here, where what was demanded was the absolute renunciation of all such methods of satisfying the claims of the human personality. At first, this didn't sit well with me at all, and I didn't want to abandon the so-called 'cheerful' Greek view of the world which had provided my vantage point for surveying my 'Art-work of the Future'. Actually it was [Georg] Herwegh who made me reflect further on my own feelings with a well-timed word. This insight into the essential nothingness of the world of appearances, he contended, lies at the root of all tragedy, and every great poet, and even every great man, must necessarily feel it intuitively. I looked at my Nibelung poems [the *Ring*] and recognized to my amazement that the very things I now found so unpalatable in the theory were already long familiar to me in my own poetic conception. Only now did I understand my own Wotan myself and, greatly shaken, I went on to a closer study of Schopenhauer's book…From now on this book never left me entirely through the years, and by the summer of the next year I had already gone through it for the fourth time. Its gradual effect on me was extraordinary and, at any rate, decisive for the rest of my life. Through it, I was able to judge things which I had previously grasped only instinctively, and it gave me more or less the equivalent of what I had gained musically from the close study of the principles of counterpoint, after being released from the tutelage of my old teacher Weinlig. All my subsequent occasional writings about artistic matters of special interest to me clearly demonstrate the impact of my study of Schopenhauer and what I had gained by it. (508-11)

Nietzsche does not discuss what the artist experiences once outside of the cave. His silence on this matter directs us to Socrates' account. As Nietzsche's predecessor describes, for those few who do escape the cave, having been accustomed to darkness, they will at first be blinded by the light. Once their eyes have adjusted, they will be able to look upon the world bathed in sunlight and see nature as it truly *is*. Importantly, not only do they *see* and study the cosmos, the Platonic Socrates tells us, but they *hear* and study the harmony of the spheres. This cosmic music is entirely different from the music of the cave.[44] Now, the Platonic Socrates continues, when the man who has escaped the cave "recall[s] his first home and the wisdom there, and his fellow prisoners in that time…he w[ill] consider himself happy for the change and pity the others."[45] Having escaped the shadowy darkness, at first this man will not want to return to the cave. However, the artist cannot keep what he has seen and heard to himself; a 'spirit' [*Geist*] of love compels him to go back down and, through his art, to share his vision of the outside world with the prisoners.

Having returned to the confines of the cave, the liberated man faces his greatest challenge yet: the envy and spite of the prisoners. The vast majority of men do not *want* to be released from their bonds and led into a world more natural and true than the one in which they were reared. Nietzsche explains the challenge facing the 'true artist:' "if he spoke to men out of his liberated soul in the language of his liberated art," he would,

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[44] Plato, *Republic*, 530d-e, 616b-c. In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, Lorenzo articulates this theory of heavenly harmonies and explains why we cannot hear this music:

> Sit Jessica,—look how the floor of heaven
> Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold,
> There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubins:
> Such harmony is in immortal souls,
> But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it…. (5.1.58-65)

[45] Plato, *Republic*, 516c.

> encounter his greatest danger and his most tremendous battle; men would rather tear him and his art to pieces [like Orpheus was] than admit they must perish for shame in the face of them.[46]

Now, in contrast to his earlier optimism, Nietzsche reflects more soberly about Bayreuth:

> It is possible that the redemption of art, the only gleam of light to be hoped for in the new time, will be an event reserved to only a couple of solitary souls, while the many continue to gaze into the flickering and smoky fire of their art: for they do not *want* light, they want bedazzlement; they *hate* light—when it is thrown upon themselves (6/4).[47]

Nietzsche's assessment requires tempered reflection on the limits of what is politically possible. Even if everyone *wanted* to, not all men *can* escape the cave. Thus, one must work within the cave and contend with its corruption. To effect radical artistic change—requiring the very foundation of society to be revolutionised, as discussed earlier in this chapter—one would need a clean slate. However, it is not feasible, as Socrates ironically suggests in the *Republic*, to expel all people over the age of ten and start anew.[48] Thus, one is forced to work within the current cave, with all its flaws and limitations. This reality of politics tempers Nietzsche's expectations of the festival at Bayreuth.

Fortunately for mankind, while many rebuke the liberated man and saviour of art, he is not easily driven away. Despite the threats of the prisoners, "he pursues them and wants to constrain them," crying:

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[46] Likewise, in Plato's *Republic*, Socrates explains with respect to the philosopher, "if [the prisoners] were somehow able to get their hands on him and kill the man who attempts to release and lead up, wouldn't they kill him?" (517a). This was the fate of Socrates, who was tried by an Athenian jury and sentenced to death for impiety and corrupting the youth. Both Plato and Xenophon give accounts of this famous trial.

[47] Hollingdale translates this passage as follows: "It is possible that the redemption of art, the only gleam of light to be hoped for in the modern age." However, "neueren Zeit" is more accurately translated as "new time."

[48] Plato, *Republic*, 540e-541a.

> 'You *shall* pass through my mysteries...you need their purifications and convulsions. Risk it for the sake of your salvation and desert for once the dimly lit piece of nature and life which is all you seem to know; I lead you into a realm that is just as real, you yourselves shall say when you emerge out of my cave into your daylight which life is more real, which is really daylight and which cave. Nature is in its depths much richer, mightier, happier, more dreadful; in the way you usually live you do not know it: learn to become nature again yourselves and then with and in nature let yourselves be transformed by the magic of my love and fire.' (6/5)

This voice is "the voice of *Wagner's art*" (6/6). The 'true artist'—now expressly identified as Nietzsche's Wagner—creates an illuminated cave within the common cave, and invites in the fettered masses. Wagner's world, although created through art, is more natural relative to the corrupt and perverse cave world. This is because Wagner imitates the world outside of the cave and translates the wisdom of the philosopher into terms accessible to the unphilosophic. The common cave, on the other hand, is created by the mercenary charlatans of modernity. For the many unable to escape the common cave, Wagner's artistic cave offers a healthier, more natural existence. Not all will heed the artist's invitation, however; the majority of men will remain imprisoned in the larger cave. It perhaps will take a long time for even a few to respond. Yet, the artist's call remains of the greatest significance to the whole of mankind: it is a testimony of the liberated artist and his love for mankind, and thus a reason to hope.

The reader is now left to ponder the following question: given the decadence of modernity, how did Wagner's art come to speak thus to mankind? The answer to this question rests on an earlier one: how did true music—that of the German masters—arise in the modern age? That we are undeserving of true music is certain:

> That we children of a wretched age were permitted to be the first to hear it shows how worthy of pity precisely our age must be,

> and shows in general that true music is a piece of fate and primal law....

Nietzsche offers no clearer explanation for how such music came into being; he only points the reader to consider the relationship between true music and primordial nature:

> Primordially determined nature through which music speaks to the world of appearance is thus the most enigmatic thing under the sun, an abyss in which force and goodness dwell together, a bridge between the self and the non-self. Who can clearly name the purpose for which it exists at all, even though it may be apparent that purposiveness exists in the way it came into being?

This is Nietzsche's answer to the question posed by Wagner at the beginning of section 5: the necessity guiding the creation of the great tradition of German music is modern man's need for such music. Nature, which constantly works to maintain equilibrium in the world, cares for all its creatures. Man, possessing the means to manipulate and so pervert virtually everything, has perverted his own nature. Music, born of primordial nature and thus transcending the limitations of modern culture, is the force that can restore balance. The answer, therefore, to Wagner's question is that music comes into being because of man's great need, while it is precisely this need that makes him undeserving. Such a possibility has radical implications for our perception and understanding of existence:

> If we let ourselves ponder the boundless miracle of this possibility and then, out of this reflection, look back on life, we shall see all flooded in light, however dark and misty it may have seemed before (6/6).

With these words Nietzsche quietly ends section 6, leaving the reader, no longer captivated by the shadows of the cave, to reflect silently on the possibility of a world bathed in a new light.

SECTION 7

i. Overview: section 7

In section 7, Nietzsche further examines the relationship between the artist and the prisoners of the cave. This is the final segment of Nietzsche's story of the cave, continued from sections 5 and 6. The artist, having been freed from the cave, now returns to liberate the prisoners—although most cannot leave, they can, at least, be free to move about the cave. The artist that returns to the common cave in section 7 is Nietzsche's Wagner. Holding forth the light of his redeemed art, Wagner bedazzles those prisoners habituated to shadowy darkness. This is the first step in their liberation. Nietzsche, already liberated from the cave, observes the interaction of the prisoners and the dramatist from an outside perspective. In this section, the philosopher discusses the essence of the dithyrambic dramatist (touching on the process of artistic creation), mankind's experience of the art of the dithyrambic dramatist, and the relationship between the two. Challenging the Platonic Socrates, Nietzsche argues that mankind *needs* the dramatist and his art. Therefore, in a reversal of Socrates' expulsion of the dramatist from the City in Speech, Nietzsche welcomes the dramatist back into the city.

ii. Encountering Wagner

Standing before a great and powerful nature such as Wagner's (which one encounters through his art), one is sure to feel small and insignificant, even overwhelmed by Wagner. As Nietzsche suggests later in the essay, "art is…the ability to communicate to others what one has experienced." Wagner's greatness as an artist, therefore, lies in the "demonic *communicability* of his nature," which conveys his "personal experience with the extremest clarity" (9/1). Experiencing Wagner's art, one loses any sense of oneself, becoming alienated from one's own being, which appears dull and obscured compared to the vividness and clarity of Wagner's self. In this process, Wagner awakens one's conscience, rousing one from one's hitherto mindless, herd-like existence, and freeing one from one's fetters. Deprived of his familiar understanding of the world, the awakened man no longer knows either himself or the meaning of his life. In the presence of Nietzsche's Wagner, one is awestruck:

> Nothing else is possible: he before whom there stands such a nature as Wagner's is from time to time compelled to reflect upon himself, upon his own pettiness and frailty, and to ask himself: what would this nature have with you? to what end do *you* really exist?[49]

Nietzsche explains that the man in the cave will "[p]robably…be unable to find an answer [to these questions], and will then stand perplexed at his own being." However, finding concrete answers is not necessary; it is enough to ask these questions and experience this perplexity:

> Let him then be satisfied to have experienced even this; let him hear in the fact that he *feels alienated from his own being* the answer to his question. For it is with precisely this feeling that he participates in Wagner's mightiest accomplishment, the central point of his power, the demonic *transmissibility* and self-relinquishment of his nature, with which others are able to communicate just as readily as it communicates with other natures, and whose greatness consists in its capacity both to surrender and to receive.

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[49] Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent references in this chapter, both in the main text and in footnotes, are taken from section 7 (which is comprised of one paragraph) of *Wagner in Bayreuth*.

The significance of this experience is the turning of the prisoner: he is released from his bonds and compelled to stand up, thus able to turn away from the shadows on the wall. Once this process is started, the prisoner begins a journey into the saving mysteries of the dramatist—a process whereby he will be transformed by "the magic of [his] love and fire" (6/5). In Plato's allegory, the liberal educator frees the prisoner from his shackles, allowing him to turn about and consequently see the source of the shadows; in Nietzsche's version of the allegory, the dramatist likewise frees the prisoner.

This is not to imply that Nietzsche disregards the role Plato attributes to the liberal educator—Nietzsche's account of the educator as liberator is found in the third *Untimely Meditation*. On Nietzsche's view, both the liberal educator and artist have important roles in turning the prisoners, thus elevating culture. Despite these similarities, there may yet be some important differences. The artist, focusing on the sub-rational, may free man of his 'false feeling' and affect an emotional liberation. Thus, the artist has the power to influence the general populace, who are largely ruled by the sub-rational elements of their soul. The liberal educator, to the contrary, targets the intellect, and thus focuses on the intellectual freeing of a few chosen men. These two processes may not be mutually exclusive: whereas those ruled by the sub-rational elements of their soul may be limited to emotional liberation and not be intellectually freed, those ruled by their intellect can be both emotionally and intellectually freed. In fact, on Nietzsche's account, it is necessary to be emotionally freed—to feel 'rightly'—before being intellectually freed. Thus, liberal education rests on artistic liberation. In this essay, Nietzsche focuses on artistic liberation, looking to Wagner as the liberator.

Although initially overwhelmed by Wagner's strong nature, as one adjusts to a bright light, the man in the cave slowly becomes accustomed to Wagner. Having overcome his initial bewilderment, the man in the cave begins communicating with Wagner. Significantly, this is a two-way process: the man in the cave not only gives of himself, but also receives Wagner's knowledge, experience, and power. Through Wagner's art—in particular, his music—the heretofore dominant horizons of the man in the cave are torn down, and the man travels spiritually beyond the walls he is habituated to, thereby gaining "knowledge of such strange and remote things." On this spiritual journey, the man "participat[es] in other souls and their destiny…[and acquires] the ability to look at the world through many eyes." This experience includes meeting Wagner and coming to see Wagner through Wagner's own eyes, thereby knowing Wagner from the inside and gaining his perspective of the world.

Evidently, Nietzsche has gone on this journey, as his intimate knowledge of Wagner testifies. Nietzsche's comprehensive knowledge of Wagner includes knowledge of Wagner the man, as well as Wagner the artist. Yet, Nietzsche has surpassed Wagner: he has gained a synoptic view of the world and come to know the world firsthand. Looking down from above, Nietzsche understands the relationship between Wagner and the world:

> in Wagner all that is visible in the world wants to become more profound and more intense by becoming audible, that it seeks here its lost soul; and all that is audible in the world likewise wants to emerge into the light and also become a phenomenon for the eye; that it wants as it were to acquire corporality.

This, Nietzsche states, is the "essence" of the dithyrambic dramatist—one whose "art always conducts him along this twofold path, from a world as an audible spectacle into a world as a visible spectacle enigmatically related to it, and the reverse." The practical artistic outcome of this process is tragedy. Before turning his attention to tragic drama and further considering this twofold path, Nietzsche pauses to consider further the nature of the dithyrambic dramatist.[50]

The dithyrambic dramatist is not solely a dramatist, but a master of the entire 'world of art.' In him, all the various arts find their perfection and are unified into a coherent artistic whole. Unlike other multi-talented artists, the dithyrambic dramatist is not at times a dramatist, at others a musician, and in between a writer—he is "at *once* actor, poet and composer," thus uniting the arts in his own being (emphasis added). Nietzsche does not argue that the dithyrambic dramatist was *always* a master of all the arts, but that he comes to be one such artistic master. Looking to the coming into being of the artist, Nietzsche suggests that it is possible for one to "see the evolution of the greatest artists as deriving from inner constraints or lacunae:"

> if...poetry was for Goethe a kind of substitute for a failed calling as a painter; if one can speak of Schiller's plays as being vulgar eloquence redirected; if Wagner himself seeks to interpret the promotion of music by the Germans by supposing among other things that, denied the seductive stimulus of a naturally melodious voice, they were compelled to take the art of music with something of the same degree of seriousness as their religious reformers took Christianity—: so, if one wanted in a similar way to associate Wagner's evolution with such an inner constraint, one might assume the existence in him of an original histrionic talent which had to deny itself satisfaction by the most obvious and trivial route and which found its expedient and deliverance in drawing together all the arts into a great histrionic manifestation.[51]

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[50] In *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'The Birth of Tragedy,'' Nietzsche argues that his portrait of the dithyrambic dramatist found here in the fourth *Untimely Meditation* does not "touc[h] even for a moment the Wagnerian reality." Rather, what Nietzsche paints is "a picture of the pre-existent poet of *Zarathustra*, sketched with abysmal profundity" (4).

[51] Nietzsche offhandedly dismisses these claims, leaving it up to the reader to evaluate their validity and significance. While Nietzsche's tone here is light, there is a more sinister meaning under the surface. Nietzsche's careful suggestion that Wagner is an actor—or at least that he started out that way—is a

Regardless of how the dithyrambic dramatist came into being, Nietzsche concludes, "in his perfect maturity he is a figure without any kind of constraint or lacunae"—all means of artistic expression are available to him without deficiency or fault. This mastery enables the dithyrambic dramatist to navigate the two-fold path of the audible and the visible, and thereby bring tragedy into being.

Like his Greek predecessors, in Wagner the opposing artistic tendencies—"the Apollonian art of sculpture, and the nonimagistic, Dionysian art of music"—are reconciled, and "the dramatic dithyramb presents itself as the common goal of both these tendencies."[52] The reconciliation of the Apollonian and Dionysian in Greek tragedy

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precursor of his later contention that Wagner was nothing but an actor. An example of his later stance towards Wagner is found in *The Case of Wagner*:

> Was Wagner a musician at all? At any rate, there was something else that he was more: namely, an incomparable *histrio*, the greatest mime, the most amazing genius of the theatre ever among Germans, our *scenic artist part excellence*. He belongs elsewhere, not in the history of music: one should not confuse him with the genuine masters of that. Wagner *and* Beethoven—that is blasphemy and really wrongs even Wagner.—As a musician, too, he was only what he was in general: he *became* a musician, he *became* a poet because the tyrant within in him, his actor's genius, compelled him. One cannot begin to figure out Wagner until one figures out his dominant instinct. (8)

That Nietzsche already held this opinion of Wagner as actor in the years of their close friendship is evidenced in the notes Nietzsche wrote on Wagner in 1874 (see chapter 4 of this thesis, note 67). There, Nietzsche firmly states:

> Wagner is a born actor, but like Goethe virtually a painter with a painter's hands, his talent seeks and finds other possibilities.—Now just imagine these frustrated instincts working together.—Wagner appreciates dramatic simplicity because the effect is strongest. He gathers all effective elements in an age that requires extremely brutal and strong expedients against its obtuseness. The splendid, the intoxicating, the confusing, the grandiose, the terrifying, the ugly, the noisy, the ecstatic, the nervous—everything is all right for him. Huge dimensions, huge means.—The irregular, the overladen brilliance and adornment seem rich and lush. He knows what our people react to: yet he always idealized 'our people' and highly esteemed them.—As an actor, he wanted to imitate man only at his most effective and his most real: in the highest affect.

Nietzsche does not follow through on these conclusions in *Wagner in Bayreuth*. Still publicly loyal to Wagner, Nietzsche leaves it up to the reader to draw his own conclusions.

[52] Nietzsche, *BT*, 1, 4. Interestingly, Nietzsche takes his definition of the dithyrambic dramatist from the Greeks, rather backhandedly supporting his conception of the dithyrambic dramatist by arguing that it must

brought together all the arts in unity. Since the decline of Greek tragedy, and the subsequent separation of these artistic tendencies, each art—painting, music, poetry, drama, sculpture—has striven to assert itself independently. As a result, opera developed as merely a chaotic aggregation of the various arts.[53] Unlike other art forms, however, opera was capable of combining the individual arts in unity, as did Greek tragedy. This potential was fulfilled by Wagner, whose "circumnavigation of the world in the domain of art" has enabled him to reconcile the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses, and thus to unify the arts, thereby creating true art (1/3). The result of this unification, Nietzsche argues, "can in no way be divined or arrived at by reasoning, but only demonstrated through a practical deed." The practical deed is the tragic drama.

iii. Reinstating the dramatist

Wagnerian opera—the practical deed of the dithyrambic dramatist—Nietzsche explains, is a powerful experience. Turning his attention to the performance of Wagner's art, Nietzsche interprets the spectator's experience:

> He before whom this deed is suddenly performed, however, will be overpowered by it as by the uncanniest, most magnetic magic: all at once he stands before a power which makes all resistance senseless, which indeed seems to rob all one's previous life of

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be so, "since it is necessarily derived from the only perfect exemplar of the dithyrambic dramatist before Wagner, from Aeschylus and his fellow Greek artists." This, however, only presents the further question: what made Aeschylus a dithyrambic dramatist?

[53] Cf. George Liébert, *Nietzsche and Music*, 66-67. Liébert discusses the unity of the arts and compares Nietzsche's discussion with Wagner's writings on the matter, especially *The Art-Work of the Future* and *Opera and Drama*.

The rivalry between the different arts is illustrated by Shakespeare in his play *Timon of Athens*, when the poet and the painter banter over which could better depict the situation of Lord Timon (1.1.1-96). Nietzsche is arguing that Wagner, having mastered poetry, painting, and music, brings forth the strengths of each to complement each other and through their unity depict the world more fully than any single art can.

> sense and comprehensibility: in an ecstasy, we swim in an enigmatic, fiery element, we no longer know ourself, no longer recognize the most familiar things; we no longer possess any standard of measurement, everything fixed and rigid begins to grow fluid, everything shines in novel colours, speaks to us in new signs and symbols....

Unlike the purely Apollonian art endorsed by Socrates in the City in Speech—which is associated with measure, restraint, and intelligibility—Wagner's dithyrambic art stirs one's deepest passions, overwhelming one's consciousness, and engulfs one's whole being. One's 'individuality' is submerged in a warm sea of 'community.' As the spectator is drawn into the world created by the dramatist and absorbed into the highest ecstasies of music, he forgets himself and, as he joins the "oneness as the soul of the race and of nature itself," the "*principium individuationis*" collapses and he "steal[s] a glimpse into the nature of the *Dionysian*."[54] Segregated from the outside world, the spectator shares in the sufferings and triumphs of the tragic hero, and feels a "mixture of joy and fear." These opposing feelings are inherently linked: "as medicines remind us of deadly poisons,...pain begets joy,...ecstasy may wring sounds of agony from us."[55] Thus, tragedy affirms the dual nature of reality: joy does not exist without pain, sorrow and suffering. To suppress the one—as we moderns often attempt—is also to mute the other.

Drawn into the drama emotionally and mentally, the spectator is overpowered; he cannot—nor does he want to—turn the dramatist away. Nietzsche emphasises our inability to do so by arguing that to drive the dramatist away requires a rare man of extraordinary nature:

> one would have to be Plato to be able to resolve as he did and to say to the dramatist: 'if a man who, by virtue of his wisdom could

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[54] Nietzsche, *BT*, 2, 1; cf. *BT*, 17.

[55] Ibid., 2.

> become all possible things and imitate all things, should enter our community, let us revere him as something miraculous and holy, anoint his head with oil and set a wreath upon it, but then try to persuade him to go away to another community.'[56]

Yet, it is not only that we *cannot* send the dramatist away, but that we *should* not. Nietzsche argues that we—we especially—*need* the dramatist; his art is necessary for our healthy living. Thus, reversing the act of Plato's Socrates, Nietzsche welcomes the dramatist into the city.

In the *Republic*, Socrates exiles the dramatist (or, to be more precise, the "mixed imitator") from the City in Speech because his style of presentation is neither politically nor morally salutary.[57] Dramatic imitation, through its appeal to the lower, irrational parts of our soul, exercises a great deal of power over men's souls. Through the beauty of his portrayals, the dramatist establishes men's horizons, and shapes their desires and aspirations, thereby influencing what men believe about, and how they act within the world. Thus, different genres of art shape regimes differently: a regime with Greek tragedy as its dominant art form will differ greatly from one that produces solely Christian morality plays; and both will differ from a regime that extols a popular theatre that by and large exists merely for the sake of entertainment.[58] To some extent, the influence of the dramatist can be controlled through censorship of dramatic content (which Socrates does, reforming traditional Greek myths to complement the education of the warrior class). Nonetheless, the style of the dramatist's presentation remains problematic. The dramatist, in order to attract his audience and draw them into his story, must appeal to, and flatter their passions. In turn, this creates an opportunity for the spectator to exercise his own passions, thereby strengthening them. Thus, drama—particularly tragic drama—threatens to upset the equanimity of soul Socrates is trying to nurture in the guardians.[59] Related to this is the problem drama poses to the moral education of the guardian class: the mixed imitator imitates not only virtue, but also vice, which most men find more interesting. Further exacerbating this problem, to make virtue interesting, it must combat a strong, clever, ruthless vice. Thus, not only is there the problem that someone must play the 'bad guy,' but also that some spectators will be attracted to the powerful villain and emulate him rather than the hero. For these and a host of other reasons, in the interest of nurturing virtuous citizens ruled by reason, Socrates concludes that it is necessary to exile the "mixed dramatist" and "use a more austere and less pleasing poet and teller of tales."[60]

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[56] Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 398a-b.

[57] Plato does not exile *all* dramatists from the city—Socrates and Adeimantus agree to admit to the city "the unmixed imitator of the decent," while expelling the "mixed" imitator. The unmixed imitator relies mostly on simple narration (speaking only as himself) and uses only a little bit of imitation to tell his story, whereas the mixed imitator imitates everything—"thunder, trumpets, flutes, and all the instruments, and even the sound of dogs, sheep and birds"—and uses only a little bit of narration. Socrates illustrates the difference, providing his own rendition of the opening of Homer's *Iliad* using only simple narrative. Socrates' account of Chryses bringing a ransom to the Achaeans for his daughter, Agamemnon's refusal, and Apollo's subsequent anger (*Iliad*, Book I, lines 8-52), void of all colour and drama, reads more like a dry government report (392c-398b). A poet using Socrates' stylistic means would be hard pressed to make the same magical impression on his spectator as the one Nietzsche attributes to the dithyrambic dramatist here in section 7.

[58] This process is not unidirectional: art does not only influence society, but society influences art—it is a dialectical relationship. A number of factors shape the regime. Of primary importance, however, is the

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nature of ruling class and what they pursue (cf. Plato, *Republic*, 544d-569c). This is turn shapes the art supported by the regime. Art then shapes the people, from which emerges the next generation of leaders, and so the process continues.

[59] Nietzsche later criticised the theatre on similar grounds. However, unlike Socrates, Nietzsche does not condemn tragedy for its irrational appeal *per se*, but criticises theatre for pandering to the masses and their base passions (which theatre inherently does as an art-form for the masses, so perversely suited to our democratic regimes). Nietzsche allows that some theatre rises above the lowest common denominator—Shakespeare is such a dramatist, offering something to all types of people, including the highest—but argues that most theatre fails to meet such high demands. Moreover, even when such a higher form of theatre is produced, it generally is not successful, making it unprofitable. Given that theatre is "a mass art par excellence," any higher ambitions in this sphere will necessarily be hampered by the weak spirit of modern men.

[60] Plato's *Republic*, 398a-b.

Regarding the exile of the dramatist, Nietzsche does not disagree with Plato's Socrates *per se*. Leaving open the possibility that Socrates was right to exile the dramatist from the City in Speech, Nietzsche counters that we—being men of a very different nature—*need* the dramatist. Thus Nietzsche does not repudiate Plato, but establishes his exile of the dramatist in context, showing that it is not universally applicable:

> It may be that one living in the Platonic community can and must persuade himself to such a thing: all we others, who live in no such community but in communities constituted quite differently, desire and demand that the sorcerer should come to us, even though we may fear him—in order that our community and the false reason and power whose embodiment it is should for once be denied.[61]

Unlike the Platonic community (which is rational and just), people being people, our communities are inherently unjust, immoral, unwise, unhappy, and riddled with countless complex problems.[62] Despite our attempts, "everything around us suffers and creates suffering"—we cannot escape (4/3). With this reality of the human condition in mind, Nietzsche emphasises our need for the dramatist, in spite of the political problems that his art poses.

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[61] Machiavelli made a similar distinction in Chapter XV of *The Prince* between the City in Speech and the cities men live in:

> But since my intent is to write something useful to whoever understands it, it has appeared to me more fitting to go directly to the effectual truth of the thing than to the imagination of it. And many have imagined republic and principalities that have never been seen or known to exist in truth; for it is so far from how one lives to how one should live that he who lets go of what is done for what should be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation. (61)

[62] However, it is not clear that Plato believes the City in Speech can be perfectly just either—at least in reality. The problems that Socrates and his interlocutors encounter in organizing the regime (such as the difficulty in enforcing the rigged marriage system), and the extremes that they must go to (such as expelling all citizens over the age of 10), demonstrates the impossibility—and perhaps undesirability—of realizing perfect justice in the city.

Nonetheless, Nietzsche admits that perhaps it is not a *complete* impossibility that there is a "condition of mankind, of its communities, moralities, societies, institutions as a whole, which could do without the imitative artist." Such a community, however, would have to be heaven on earth; a place where men are communally happy, moral, and wise, and where there is no injustice or suffering (cf. 4/3). Given that such a regime is unlikely to exist outside man's imagination, Nietzsche quickly qualifies that "this 'perhaps' is one of the boldest there is and amounts to the same thing as a 'very improbably.'" However, while it is unlikely that there is a city that can do without the dramatist, there may be an individual who can.[63] Nietzsche argues that there is one type of man who could do without art. This man would see the "false reason and power" our community embodies, yet,

> [he] could anticipate and realize in his mind the supreme moment of all time yet to come and then, like Faust, had to grow blind [to the reality surrounding him]—had to and had a right to.[64]

Plato was one such man: "after having cast a single glance into the Hellenic ideal, [he] had the right to be blind to Hellenic reality." We, on the other hand, forced by modern science, see our modern 'reality' clearly enough, are unable to find solace in a higher state of being. Confronted with the injustice and misery of our condition, we need art to cope with daily life:

> We…need art precisely because we have evolved *looking into the face of reality*; and we need precisely the universal dramatist so that he may, for a few hours at least, redeem us from the fearful

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[63] Similarly, the *Republic* teaches that there cannot be a just city, but there can be a just man.

[64] This is a reference to Goethe's *Faust*, Part II, line 11495-510.

> tension which the seeing man now feels between himself and the tasks imposed upon him.[65]

Echoing what Nietzsche emphasised in section 4, art enables us to live in the tension created by our knowledge of the world and our inability to cope with that knowledge: art ensures that the bow shall not break (4/3). Plato and the regime he constructed could live without art; we lesser men, with our imperfect regimes, cannot.

As Nietzsche discusses in section 4, tragic art offers man a necessary psychological and spiritual rest from the toils of life, ushering him back into the world refreshed and recreated. The rest offered by tragic art is not an escape from life, but a simplified picture of life wherein solutions are presented and action is made meaningful. Tragic art portrays the nature of the world revealed by modern science, a world from which we find ourselves alienated, thereby compelling the spectator to acknowledge the wisdom of Silenus—that life is meaningless and suffering and injustice are inevitable—and share the sufferings of Dionysus. While such knowledge threatens to nauseate men, tragedy counteracts such a debilitating outcome: it offers a cure through the image of the tragic hero.[66] In the world of the tragic drama, suffering takes on a new significance and the struggles of the hero become sublime, thereby affirming life and uplifting the spectator:

> With [the dramatist] we ascend to the topmost rung of sensibility... only there do we fancy we have returned to free nature and the realm of freedom; from this height we behold, as

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[65] Nietzsche is speaking as "we" who need art, however, like Plato, Nietzsche demonstrates in this essay that he has "anticipate[d] and realize[d] in his mind the supreme moment of all time yet to come." Thus, like Plato, Nietzsche does not need Wagner's art. Yet, Nietzsche is not blind to German reality, despite any right he may have to this blindness. He recognises the need of modern man for Wagner's art, and thus supports it publicly. It was not until after Wagner had brought his work to fruition at the festival that Nietzsche denounced publicly both Wagner and his art. Even then, however, Nietzsche did not refute the idea of Wagner's art, but what it had become in the modern world.

[66] This nausea is the fate of Hamlet, as discussed in chapter 4 of this thesis.

> though in immense air-drawn reflections, our struggles, victories and defeats as something sublime and significant; we have delight in the rhythm of passion and in its victim, with every mighty step the hero takes we hear the dull echo of death and in its proximity we sense the supreme stimulus to life.

As Nietzsche describes, traversing the high path created by the dramatist, we transcend the realm of becoming and glimpse the eternal world of being; the dramatist has allowed us to "raise our head above the water…even if only a little, and observe what stream it is in which we are so deeply immersed."[67] With this new perspective of the world, life is imbued with a new meaning; we no longer are discouraged by our own futile struggles, for they have taken on a new import as part of the larger, beautiful struggle of the human race. With the help of Wagner's insight, we "se[e] that suffering pertains to the essence of things and from then on, grown as it were more impersonal, [we accept our] own share of suffering more calmly" (8/5). Tragedy has given us the metaphysical comfort "that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable."[68] Now looking at the terrible reality of existence, we are consoled by the idea that there is something higher, more noble, than us that makes everything—even suffering—worthwhile. Thus, tragic art—as only art can—"make[s] life possible and worth living."[69]

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[67] Nietzsche, *SE*, 5.

[68] Nietzsche, *BT*, 7. Tragedy provides this comfort without being optimistic—a state of being that Nietzsche holds as decadent. He emphatically states at the end of *Wagner in Bayreuth*:

> May sane reason preserve us from the belief that mankind will at any future time attain to a final ideal order of things, and that happiness will then shine down upon with unwavering ray like the sun of the tropics… (11/1).

Tragic men are no such utopians. When the dramatist offers a cheerful view, it is not the cheerfulness of the Christian, or even the Baconian, view: "the poet's whole conception is nothing but precisely that bright image which healing nature projects before us after a glance into the abyss." This sort of cheerfulness—a pessimism of strength—is Greek cheerfulness. Nietzsche, *BT*, 9.

[69] Ibid., 1.

Once returned to our everyday reality, having emerged from the spell of the dramatist, we reflect on the dramatic experience as we do on a dream. Comparing our memories of the drama with our actual lives, however, we "find the dream almost more real than waking actuality." In contrast to our habitual existence in our cave, in the dramatist's world we felt more alive and genuinely human. There, for example, the characters we met were richer and more robust than the pale shadows with whom we live; in the dramatist's cave, our emotions were more intense and genuine than those with which we are accustomed. For the dithyrambic dramatist—who not only experiences his art but *creates* it—the antithesis between these two states is more pronounced:

> There he stands in the midst of all the noisy summonses and importunities of the day, of the necessities of life, of society, of the state—as what? Perhaps as though he were the only one awake, the only one aware of the real and true, among confused and tormented sleepers, among sufferers deluded by fancy; sometimes no doubt he even feels as though a victim of a protracted sleeplessness, as though condemned to pass a clear and conscious life in the company of sleepwalkers and creatures of a spectral earnestness....

At issue is whether or not art—which is inherently both natural and artificial—can be more real than so-called reality. This question was raised earlier by Nietzsche in section 6. There, Nietzsche spoke of a similar antithesis—between the light of the dramatist's cave and that of the common cave—and similarly concluded that true art is more real than the decadence of cave life (6/5). However, having taken art so seriously, "we shall run into danger, and be tempted to take life too easily." Nietzsche warns against allowing art to take precedence over life: art is to *serve* life, to wake us up and stir us to action; not to enable us to escape from life.[70] The function of art is to offer a moment of repose, to transform and renew man, and to strengthen his love and sense of justice—genuine recreation—that he may go back into the world refreshed and ready for action (4/2).[71] Our enthusiasm for art should not lead us to allow art to supplant life.

Having examined the dramatist's deed, Nietzsche considers how and why the dithyrambic dramatist creates his art. The dramatist, living a truer, more awake existence than the rest of mankind—looks down on our world with contempt and mockery. Thus, one might expect that he would choose to live outside of the cave. To be sure, the dramatist *is* tempted to live such a life, opting to live alone in the sublime air high above the musty air of mankind. But, Nietzsche explains, a miracle happens: the dramatist's mocking attitude towards man is joined by a contrary impulse:

> the longing to descend from the heights into the depths, the living desire for the earth, for the joy of communion—then, when he recalls all he is deprived of as a solitary creature, the longing at once to take all that is weak, human and lost and, like a god come to earth, 'raise it to Heaven in fiery arms,' so as at last to find love and no longer only worship, and in love to relinquish himself utterly!

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[70] The image of an 'awakener' is not unique to Nietzsche. In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates presents himself as a gadfly stinging a sluggish horse into motion (60e); in the *Republic*, the man who returns to the cave awakens the prisoners (514a-517a).

[71] Fischer-Dieskau argues that at this point in *Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche subtly rebukes the Wagnerites' "overemphasis on enjoyment:"

> The disciples should not be concerned with art alone, for it is not a narcotic or specific to relive one's misery. Schopenhauer spoke of a kind of redemption and spiritual surge that only art can transmit, a bliss for the moment. This now included the transformation that Nietzsche demanded of art and had already affirmed in his youth. (135)

This "peculiar hybrid" of *anabasis* and *katabasis* in the dramatist is "the actual miracle in the soul of the dithyrambic dramatist."[72] To understand the dramatist and why he creates, Nietzsche explains, one must look to these conflicting impulses:

> For the creative moments in his art are produced by the tension occasioned by this hybrid, when the uncanny and exuberant sensation of surprise and amazement at the world is coupled with the ardent longing to approach this same world as a lover.

This hybrid is caused by the two conflicting drives that Nietzsche identified in Wagner's soul in section 2: his powerful will, which leads him upwards out of the cave, and his 'spirit' [*Geist*] of love, which compels him to return to the world (2/3). As Nietzsche argues in section 2, the dramatist only fulfills his promise when these two drives come together and are loyal to each other. From their relationship, true art is born. As will be seen in section 8, the fruit of this relationship in Wagner is the festival at Bayreuth: the loyalty of Wagner's two drives necessitated that he bring his art into the world for mankind.

Having gained an 'inner view' of the dramatist, and thus begun truly to understand him, the reader is now prepared to reconsider the "essence" of the dithyrambic dramatist introduced at the beginning of section 7. This essence, as identified by Nietzsche, is the dithyrambic dramatist's negotiation of the twofold path between the audible and visible realms of nature. By travelling this path, the dithyrambic dramatist reveals to man a Nature that is uncorrupted by the cave. The process begins with the glance of the dithyrambic dramatist: as he looks down on the world with his glance—at once *"clearsighted and lovingly selfless"*—he sees the world devoid of shadows and false appearances:

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[72] Socrates gives an account of why the philosopher must "go down" in Plato's *Republic*, as does Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*.

> everything he now illuminates with the twofold light of this glance is at once compelled by nature to discharge all its forces with fearful rapidity in a revelation of its most deeply hidden secrets: and it does so out of *shame*. It is more than a figure of speech to say that with this glance he has surprised nature, that he has seen her naked.

Ashamed, nature seeks to hide herself and thus "flee[s] into her antithesis:"

> What has hitherto been invisible and inward escapes into the sphere of the visible and becomes appearance; what was hitherto only visible flees into the dark ocean of the audible: *thus, by seeking to hide herself, nature reveals the character of her antitheses.*

The dramatist, having seen the antithesis of nature, encapsulates this image and recreates it for mankind. Thus, the image of nature the spectator receives is not a true image, but an inverse image of nature—like a film negative. It is left to the viewer to translate the visible back into the audible, and the audible back into the visible, thereby developing a picture of nature in her original form. Nietzsche provides a more concrete explanation of this in section 9:

> Wagner…presents every dramatic event in a threefold rendering, through words, gestures and music: the music transmits the fundamental impulses in the depths of the persons represented in the drama directly to the soul of the listeners, who now perceive in these same persons' gestures the first visible form of those inner events, and in the words a second, paler manifestation of them translated into a more conscious act of will. All these effects take place simultaneously without in the least interfering with one another, and compel him before whom such a drama is presented to a quite novel understanding and empathy, just as though his senses had all at once grown more spiritual and his spirit more sensual, and as though everything that longs to know is now in a free and blissful transport of knowing. (9/4)

What is otherwise inexpressible is given expression by the dithyrambic dramatist—he can communicate through music what language cannot; he can give visible form to what is otherwise invisible. Everything—dance, word, melody, and image give expression to the world. Regarding this power, Nietzsche claims,

> Of Wagner the *musician* it can be said in general that he has bestowed a language upon everything in nature which has hitherto not wanted to *speak*: he does not believe that anything is obliged to be dumb. He plunges into daybreaks, woods, mist, ravines, mountain heights, the dread of night, moonlight, and remarks in them a secret desire: they want to resound. (9/6)

By translating between what is visible and what is audible, Wagner gives voice and image to all of nature, thereby communicating a comprehensive view of nature.

Nietzsche concludes this section with a rather enigmatic description of 'the birth of tragedy' and the coming into being of the dithyrambic dramatist. This process seems to defy rational explanation—even in Nietzsche's competent hands. Nietzsche himself admitted as much earlier in section 7: we cannot divine the faculty of the dithyrambic dramatist, we must experience his art. Fully understanding tragedy, and hence Nietzsche's account, presupposes that one has experienced tragedy—that one has felt simultaneously "dread understanding and exuberant insight," and has been drawn into the story as one is immersed in a dream, in the process losing their individuality to the unified soul of men and nature.[73] Similarly, one cannot fully know music from a silent score. The powerful finale to Beethoven's ninth symphony cannot be communicated in words alone; one must experience the music. Thus we return to Nietzsche's earlier point with respect to education: one cannot think correctly about tragedy, and thus comprehend tragedy, without first feeling correctly about tragedy. A rational account can help one make sense of tragedy—why it is important, what the spectator experiences, how it affects man, and even guide one in how one approaches tragedy, thereby refining one's experience—but it cannot substitute for the actual experience of witnessing tragedy. With the importance of this participatory experience in mind, the reader turns with Nietzsche to practical concerns regarding the festival at Bayreuth, where tragedy is reborn into the world, so that men may once again experience this great art.

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[73] Shakespeare is our best source for tragedy in modern times.

CHAPTER SIX: SECTION 8

i. Overview: section 8

Nietzsche's portrait of a 'young and beautified' Wagner, at the outset of section 8, is only half complete. In section 7, Nietzsche told the story of Wagner's coming into being as the highest type of artist; one who, having been liberated from the modern cave, redeems art and brings tragedy into being. What remains is the story of Wagner's "actual life" (8/1).[1] Wagner was not only a dithyrambic dramatist, but an 'actual' man with his own idiosyncrasies, temptations, and struggles, both external and internal to himself. In order to understand the man Wagner became, one must also comprehend his personal growth. Despite his focus on the historical Wagner, Nietzsche continues to paint an idealised portrait, transforming the artist's indiscretions into merits and augmenting his virtues. One might even go so far as to say that in this account, Nietzsche changes the ending of Wagner's life.[2] Pairing the two portraits of Wagner—the 'artistic' and the 'historical'—one is presented with Nietzsche's model of what is necessary of a man in the present day to overcome his time and create true art. This model is meant to inspire.

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[1] Nietzsche's use of 'actual' does not promise historical exactitude, but rather, as in sections 2 and 3, he cosmetises Wagner's 'actual' life. Hayman notes that discrepancy between Nietzsche's 'actual' thoughts and what he wrote for the public, comparing *Wagner in Bayreuth* to Nietzsche's private notes. Regarding the philosopher, Hayman concludes: "unable to attack the qualities that had enabled him to convert the Bayreuth fantasy into a reality, Nietzsche found a way of pushing his stowaway criticisms on board the vessel of praise" (184-86).

Section 8 is comparable to sections 2 and 3, covering similar topics of Wagner's life. However, having been introduced to the dithyrambic dramatist in section 7, Nietzsche reconsiders Wagner's life in this new light, considering who he became and what he achieved.

[2] In *Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche argues that Wagner, unaffected by his newfound success, remained loyal to his art. In reality, Nietzsche saw Wagner becoming corrupted by modern fame. This interpretation is developed further in this chapter.

From Wagner's example, "we…shall take courage from the sight of a hero who, even in regard to modern culture, 'has not learned to fear'" (3/2).

This second account of Wagner, provided in section 8, chronicles how Nietzsche's Wagner became 'untimely.' Building on his earlier characterization of Wagner's nature as "torn apart into two drives or spheres"—a powerful 'will' and a 'spirit' [*Geist*] of love (2/3)—Nietzsche narrates Wagner's "unceasing struggle with himself," and the difficult but necessary process by which Wagner's 'will' became loyal to his 'spirit' [*Geist*] (8/1). As testimony to Wagner's becoming, Nietzsche's tale bears witness to Wagner's rejection of the art of modernity, his conception of a new art, and what he saw as required to realise that art. The story of Nietzsche's 'actual' Wagner, resting on a consideration of the philosopher's discussion of various issues in the essay thus far, brings the reader closer to achieving the "Wagnerian inner view"—a view, Nietzsche argues, that is essential to understanding Wagner's great deed (1/5). Having surveyed the heights of the dithyrambic dramatist in section 7, Nietzsche now turns his penetrating eye back down to the modern cave for a more detailed consideration of Wagner's life in the Germany of his day.

Nietzsche divides Wagner's mature life into three phases. Maintaining continuity throughout his mature life, each of these phases is defined with respect to Wagner's "*ruling idea*:" the idea that "an incomparable amount of influence, the greatest influence of all the arts, could be exercised through the theatre." As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, art has traditionally been recognised for its powerful effect on man. It influences the human soul, establishes man's view of the world and himself, and shapes his expectations of life. Opera, the height of theatre, is especially powerful; it combines all the arts. Drawing on the strengths of the other arts, opera is able to achieve greater scope and depth than any individual art. Through use of spoken word, image, myth, dance, dress, decor, as well as the great power of music, opera influences man's entire being—his passions and his intellect—simultaneously. United through common experience, opera has the potential to affect large groups of men, giving it distinct political power. But this general idea—the capacity of the theatre to influence man—has no inherent aim. Wagner, accepting this general idea, pondered how he would act on it, questioning the manner in which this influence was best accomplished and for what end. Consequently, he became ceaselessly occupied with questions regarding this influence: "incomparable influence—how? over whom?" (8/1). Nietzsche uses the composer's different answers to these questions to distinguish the various phases of Wagner's life.

The first phase of Wagner's life is marked by his desire to influence and rule the masses through theatre, thereby gaining worldly power and fame. To this end, Wagner embraced grand opera. The second phase of Wagner's life is intermediary; a transitional period at the end of which Wagner became wholly himself. This phase begins with Wagner's rejection of grand opera, as well as the power and fame offered by modern society, and his subsequent search for a new, more deserving audience to influence, which he believed to be the 'folk.' Wagner reached out to the folk with a new style of opera; he soon apprehended, however, that the folk were not to be found in modern society. Unsuccessful, Wagner realised his art was not for his time—no deserving spectator was to be found. Thus, he turned his back on the modern cave and temporarily abandoned his quest for influence. This event ushered Wagner into the final stage of his life. Free of the 'traps and fetters' of the cave, Wagner became his true self: "Only now did the genius of the dithyrambic drama throw off his last concealment!" (8/5). Wagner now created for no audience but himself; he channeled all of his previous desire for power into artistic creativity. Yet, Wagner could not entirely alienate himself from the world. He was reminded of his 'lofty duty'—to realise his art fully so that it may be preserved for a future, more deserving, time. This responsibility led Wagner to the idea of the festival of Bayreuth. In order to realise his art as he envisioned, it was essential that he found an entirely new theatre for the performance of his art. Inseparable from the development of Bayreuth, the Nietzschean story of Wagner's 'actual' life is also the story of the maturation of the idea of the festival and why it was necessary.

ii. Wagner's ruling idea

As with any kind of power, cultural influence can be used for good or ill; it has no intrinsic benefit or harm. The manner in which authority is exerted is contingent on the person who is exercising power (and, in light of the beginning of Nietzsche's essay, also the audience). When Wagner was first seized with the idea of gaining influence over man through the theatre, he did not have altruistic intentions. Rather, he saw influence as a means of attaining worldly fame and power: "He wanted to conquer and rule as no artist had done before."[3] Driven by his strong will, Wagner longed for "tyrannical omnipotence." Directing his whole being—his "ability and his 'taste,' and likewise his objective"—towards this end, Wagner searched society: "With a jealous, deeply probing glance he scanned everything that enjoyed success," observing the souls of "those upon whom influence had to be exerted." With respect to theatre, at this moment in history there were three distinct models of opera: German romantic opera (represented by Weber); Italian opera (of which Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti were masters); and French opera, known as 'grand opera' (which boasted the likes of Auber, Meyerbeer, and Halévy). Wagner found the influence he desired in grand opera. Centred in Paris, grand opera dominated European theatre. It drew large audiences, to whom it promised a spectacular show and sensational drama, and offered both fame and fortune to those composers who mastered its technique.[4] Wagner observed this scene closely and "reached at once for the means of mastering it." Desiring to rule the souls of the masses, he put his artistic talents in their service, unconsciously but inevitably lowering himself to their demands. He did not care about the more aesthetically refined sensations of a few solitary souls—the friends he later desired—but sought to create "those violent storms of the soul produced by the great crowd when dramatic song rises in intensity, that sudden explosive intoxication of spirit" (8/1). Insofar as the audience was ruled by the irrational part of their souls, Wagner focused his attention on conjuring strong feeling and overwhelming passions to meet their 'needs' (which, as discussed in chapter 5, are a perversion of man's true needs). Thus, Wagner's strong will, which empowered him to become the great artist that he was, at first threatened to enslave his artistic talent to the debased demands of the masses.

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[3] In *Nietzsche*, Kaufmann argues that Nietzsche's discussion of power with respect to Wagner is not merely random remarks, but is a representation of his early views of his conception of the will to power (179-81).

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[4] In *The Tristan Chord*, Magee describes grand opera in relation to nineteenth century Europe and the art world:

> [French opera] based its appeal on star singers and stage spectacle, characteristically using historical subjects that offered opportunities for panoramic sets, crowd scenes, parading armies, church processions and the like. The operas were long—nearly always in five acts, and nearly always including a ballet—and expensive to stage. The combination of stars, expense and spectacle made them prominent as social events, and in keeping with this almost as much interest attached to the audience as to what was happening on the stage. This activity had its international centre in Paris. The money and fame that it offered made it an irresistible magnet for talent: it was typical of what used to happen in those days that when Rossini had made his name in Italy he moved to Paris and spend most of the rest of his life there. International success in opera meant success in Paris. (12)

In grand opera, Wagner learned how to succeed in exerting great influence by means of the theatre. Gradually, however, he became aware of "the whole shameful situation in which art and artists find themselves" (8/2). Through the example of Meyerbeer—whose genius and mastery of technique placed him at the top of grand opera, and thus the opera world—Wagner became aware of the nature of art in modernity, and was suitably repulsed. There was nothing genuine or noble in modern art—success with the public rested on superficial 'artifices' and the manipulation of false passions. According to Nietzsche, Wagner was not the only one who recognised opera's superficiality:

> now it has gradually become known with what an intricate web of influences of every kind Meyerbeer prepared and achieved each of his great victories, and with what scrupulous care he weighed the succession of 'effects' in the opera itself... (8/1).[5]

Realizing the deception artists must employ, and the level to which they must sink in order to be successful with the public (especially a public who "counts art and artists among its retinue of slaves whose task it is to satisfy its *imagined needs*"), Wagner was incensed. Modern theatre was intimately connected to the character of modern man; the two existing in a mutually debasing relationship. Theatre, which pandered to the vulgar tastes of the many, was corrupted by the decadence of modern society; modern man, in turn, was moulded by a debased theatre and the decadence of society thereby reinforced. Insofar as it was dictated by the debased terms of society, Wagner rejected grand opera, finding the success it offered to be both unsavoury and unfulfilling. Despite the pervasive influence of grand opera, Wagner was conscious of the shallowness of such influence; Wagner longed for a higher, more sublime power—true greatness that could stand the test of time (8/2). Free of the "traps and fetters" of modernity, he hunted for a new means, as well as for an audience of an entirely different nature, by which to fulfill his goal (3/1).

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[5] In Nietzsche's later writings, Wagner did not escape such criticisms. Drawing from *The Case of Wagner* (3) and Nietzsche's critique of "the whole of Wagner's art as 'acted,'" in *The Tristan Chord*, Magee summaries Nietzsche's critique:

> [Wagner's art] gives us the illusion that it is conveying profound insights when in fact it is not giving us any insights at all; and it deceives us into thinking that passionate emotions are being expressed when these emotions have never been felt but are merely being acted. Everything is fake. Wagner's art is one vast confidence trick. He is like a stage conjuror, an illusionist, only the audience does not realize that the whole thing is a deception from start to finish. 'Ah, this old magician, how much he imposed upon on us!...What a clever rattlesnake!' (324)

Nietzsche does not criticise this phase of Wagner's life, but interprets it in a higher light: despite having "started out so greatly in error" and "engaged in the most revolting form of his art," Wagner did so in a way that was great, and "was therefore extraordinarily fruitful." Practically speaking, throughout this phase Wagner developed and honed his artistic skills. More importantly, Wagner "came to comprehend the nature of modern success, of the modern public and of the whole of modern artistic falsity." Through this process, Nietzsche argues, Wagner,

> produced in himself the first trembling awareness of how he himself might be purified. It was as though from then on the spirit of music spoke to him with a wholly novel psychical magic (8/1).

As a result, Wagner, like Schopenhauer, became aware of his time and "strove against it and expelled it from him."[6] Rejecting the art of his time and the power it offered, and refusing to conform to modern taste and opinion, was essential for Wagner to remain loyal to himself. This rejection was Wagner's first step towards becoming "whole and wholly himself" and thereby realizing his ultimate goal (3/1). It was also his first step in becoming 'untimely.'

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[6] Nietzsche, *SE*, 3.

Wagner's transition to the second phase of his life is marked by a spiritual event: his 'will' was joined by his other fundamental drive—his 'spirit' [*Geist*] of love. United with this pure and free force, his 'will' was directed on a new path (2/3). Nietzsche argues that to understand Wagner's life after this pivotal moment, one must look to the relationship between these two drives:

> Every further stage in Wagner's evolution is characterized by a closer and closer union between his two fundamental drives: their wariness of one another diminishes, and hereafter his higher self no longer condescends to serve its violent, more earthly brother, it *loves* it and cannot but serve it. Finally, when the goal of this evolution has been reached, the most tender and pure elements are contained within the most powerful, the impetuous drive goes its way as before but along a different path to where the higher self is at home; and conversely the latter descends to earth and in everything earthly recognizes its own image. (8/2)

Nietzsche declines to expand on this brief explanation of the evolutionary process and goal of the artist, claiming that they are both beyond discursive intelligibility. Nietzsche's refusal to communicate is not due to any lack of understanding on his part—he must understand to know what is incommunicable. Thus, following the interpretive rule that 'like can only be understood by like,' one must conclude that Nietzsche knows this evolutionary process and goal firsthand; having undergone a similar process himself, he can attest to their character.[7] Nevertheless, while it may not be possible to define this intermediate phase of Wagner's life metaphysically to one who has not experienced it, Nietzsche argues that one can do so historically.

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[7] For an explanation of this rule, see chapter 2 of this thesis, note 8.

Having abandoned his previous desire to rule the masses, Wagner underwent a "period of great despair and atonement." During this time, he purified himself of the corrupting elements of the modern cave. His 'will' now coupled with his 'spirit' [*Geist*] of love, Wagner rejected the power and fame offered by the cave. He did not, however, reject power *per se*, but only sought a less worldly form. Once free of his former fetters, the ruling idea of Wagner's life "[re]appeared before him [but] in a new shape and more powerfully than ever" (8/2). Thus, Wagner returned to his defining question: "incomparable influence—how? over whom?" (8/1). Now with a critical eye, Wagner looked at art in modernity and found it distasteful. Recalling those he had previously attempted to influence, he shuddered, ashamed of his participation in the most revolting aspects of art. Wagner now understood the true use of art: to meet man's true spiritual needs. In modern society, this relationship had been perverted—rather than serving man, art ruled him:

> Just as it has employed its power over the powerless, over the folk, in the most hardhearted and cunning fashion so as to render them ever more serviceable, base and less natural, and to create out of them the modern 'worker,' so it has deprived the folk of the greatest and purest things its profoundest needs moved it to produce and in which, as the true and only artist, it tenderly expressed its soul—its mythology, its song, its dance, its linguistic inventiveness—in order to distil from them a lascivious antidote to the exhaustion and boredom of its existence, the arts of today.

Such use of art enraged and disgusted Wagner. "Out of pity for the folk," a victim of the modern cave and its art, he became a revolutionary. The folk—a community of men who, like those in the 'state of nature,' were pure and innocent—now became the object of

Wagner's aesthetic endeavours.[8] Wagner was ostensibly looking for men inside the cave who were not yet thoroughly corrupted and thus could form a community of higher men. In the folk, Wagner "now saw the only spectator and listener who might be worthy of and equal to the power of his art-work as he dreamed of it" (8/2).

While Wagner believed he had found his desired audience, he faced a practical problem: the folk had been artificially suppressed by the rulers of the modern cave to such an extent that the folk, as Wagner envisioned, could hardly be imagined. Still hopeful, Wagner was faced with a new problem: "how does the folk come into being? how can it be resurrected?" (8/2). In effect, Wagner was discerning the process by which an aggregate of individuals come together to form a cultural group. What, he asked, drives people together to share a way of life, and, in turn, what binds them together into a folk?[9] According to Nietzsche, Wagner found only one answer: a folk comes into being out of shared spiritual needs, and is bound together by shared means of meeting those needs. This is the foundation of a true community, and thus a genuine culture:

> if a multiplicity of people suffered the same need as he suffered, that would be the folk, he said to himself. And where the same need led to the same impulse and desire, the same kind of satisfaction must necessarily be sought and the same happiness discovered in this satisfaction.

Looking for what "cheered and consoled him the most in his need," Wagner turned to myth and music: "In these two elements he bathed and healed his soul, they were what he desired most ardently." Universally, myth and music are important means of meeting man's needs. Nietzsche explains, through Wagner's insight, that myth is "the product and language of the folk's need," and music has "a similar though even more enigmatic origin" (8/3). Through music and myth, men are able to communicate their needs, illuminate existence, and find comfort and solace. Sharing a view of and feeling about the world communicated through myth and music, men are simultaneously bound together and distinguished from other groups, forming a unified cultural entity—a 'folk.'

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[8] The German word translated here as 'folk' is *Volk*, which is used in its archaic sense. Hollingdale explains that Nietzsche used *Volk* in the same sense that Wagner did in his writings, meaning "the 'people' or the 'nation' as a cultural, as opposed to political, entity. This sense of *Volk* has an English analogue in the phrases 'folk-story' and 'folk music.'"

[9] The question of how an aggregate of individual men come together to form a community is a perennial problem which the great philosophers, from Plato and Aristotle to Rousseau and Hobbes, have tackled. Nietzsche contributes his own account, which deserves further consideration.

Wagner, recognizing the crucial role of myth and music in the resurrection of the folk, looked to their status in modern society. Neither was faring well:

> myth had been deeply debased and disfigured, transformed into the 'fairy tale', the plaything of the women and children of the degenerate folk and quite divested of its miraculous and serious manly nature; music had maintained itself among the poor and simple, among the solitary, the German musician had failed to establish himself in the luxury trade in the arts and had himself become a fairy tale full of monsters and touching sounds and signs, an asker of the wrong questions, something quite enchanted and in need of redemption.

Consequently, Wagner set out radically to transform and reinvigorate myth and music in modern society, thereby restoring them to their rightful strength and place. This was the necessary task only he as artist could accomplish: "to restore to the myth its manliness, and to take the spell from music and bring it to speech." In this process, Wagner discovered a middle ground between myth and music, a ground previously undiscovered by opera composers. By uniting the dramatic presentation of myth with music, Wagner rediscovered art as such, and "all at once he felt his strength for *drama* unfettered." Music allowed him to give expression to the inner feelings of the characters of the myth, while myth enabled him to tell a particular story.[10] With this new art-work, Wagner reached out to the folk. He communicated all he knew of the world, including the pain and suffering of existence, asking men if they shared his need and comfort:

> 'Where are you who suffer and desire as I do? Where are the many which I long to see become a folk? The sign by which I shall know you is that you shall have the same happiness and the same comfort in common with me: your suffering shall be revealed to me through your joy!' (8/3)

Asking these questions in *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, Wagner, a solitary soul in the modern world, looked for kindred souls with whom to found a community on his art.

Wagner's search for the folk did not succeed. This was not due to Wagner's lack of talent or greatness. It was not the right time; there were no "recipients adequate to the meaning of [Wagner's] gift" (1/1). So thoroughly corrupted by the modern cave, modern men—a perversion of their natural selves—were not sensitive to Wagner's need. Hence, modern men did not even comprehend Wagner's question.[11] Not that there was no response, Nietzsche clarifies. Modern men did respond to Wagner's art; their reactions, however, simply proved their present unworthiness. Being shallow themselves, they were oblivious to the deeper significance of Wagner's art and its true cultural significance. Interest was based on the novelty of Wagner's art, rather than its importance for life. Misunderstanding Wagner's art, the reaction of modern men bore witness to their barbarian nature:

> there were twitterings about [Wagner's] new art-works as though they had been created for the express purpose of being talked to pieces. The whole lust for aesthetic chattering and scribbling

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[10] The relationship between drama and music, and the power of music to reinvigorate drama, is discussed further in chapter 5 of this thesis.

[11] Similarly, at the end of Nietzsche's publication career, he repeatedly asked: "Am I understood?" 'Why I am a Destiny,' *EH*, 4.

> erupted among the Germans like a fever, the art-works and the person of the artist were assessed and fingered with that shamelessness which characterizes German scholars no less than it does German journalists.

Wagner now realised that the folk he had pursued was only a mere "phantom," and that his art would find but too few worthy recipients in the present—it was destined for a different time. From his attempt to create a new art within the modern cave, Wagner understood that reform was not possible—the problems of the time were too deep and pervasive. For the establishment of true art within a deserving community of people, an entirely new society was necessary:

> The possibility of a total upheaval of all things rose before [Wagner's] eyes, and he no longer shrank from this possibility: perhaps a new hope could be erected on the other side of revolution and destruction, perhaps not—and in any event nothingness is better than something repulsive (8/4).

Wagner, turned "revolutionary out of pity for the folk," now became an outcast (8/2). Finding himself "utterly alone...he...abandoned hope;" he shunned the theatre of his day, as well as the politics in which it was immersed (8/5). "Before long," Nietzsche explains, "he was a political refugee and penniless" (8/4).[12]

While Wagner's quest for the folk ultimately ended in failure, as did his involvement with grand opera, his search was not without personal benefit. In this intermediary stage, Wagner abandoned his "desire for supreme power," translating that former longing "into artistic creativity" (8/5). Only now, having ceased his quest to influence the modern cave, was Wagner released from the cave and free to pursue a higher goal. Fully liberated, Wagner became wholly himself—his "ability and his 'taste' and likewise his objective," formerly enslaved, now "*became* great and free" (8/1). Guided solely by intuition, he now followed his own artistic path. He no longer wanted to sway the masses or create a folk: Wagner created art only for himself. Through this process, Nietzsche's Wagner reached the ultimate goal of his personal evolution:

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[12] The historical Wagner, heavily influenced by the philosophy of Feuerbach, played an active role in the revolution of 1848-49, forcing him into exile. He continuously sought to downplay his involvement in the Dresden uprising, but his reputation followed him. In *Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche removes the stigma from Wagner's revolutionary activities and presents them in a higher light.

> it was only now, when his outward and inner destiny had taken so fearful a turn, that the great man entered upon the period of his life over which the light of supreme mastery lies like the glitter of liquid gold! Only now did the genius of the dithyrambic drama throw off his last concealment!

From now on, Nietzsche explains, Wagner wanted only one thing: "to think of the nature of the world in the form of actions, to philosophise in sound; what was left in him of *intentionality* was bent upon the expression of his final *insights*," which he communicated through the creation of artistic worlds (8/5). As Nietzsche states later in the essay, Wagner expressed his understanding of the world and gave voice to nature: "If the philosopher says it is *one* will which in animate and inanimate nature thirsts for existence, the musician adds: and this will wants at every stage an existence in sound" (9/6).

His "universal glance," which had previously deeply probed modern society, now descended again—"this time to the very bottom." Looking at the world truthfully, Wagner saw "that suffering pertains to the essence of things."[13] Realizing that all men inevitably suffer—that it is an inherent part of existence—Wagner's own suffering now appeared more impersonal. Thus, he "accept[ed] his own share of suffering more calmly" and reconciled himself to the world. No longer at odds with life, Wagner became overfilled with life. Despite his pessimistic view, he rejoiced in life and affirmed existence. This, Nietzsche argues, accounts for the contrasting worlds of the tragic

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[13] Wagner attributed this realization to his study of the philosophy of Schopenhauer. Cf. note 44 in chapter 5 of this thesis.

Tristan und Isolde and the comic *Meistersinger*. That Wagner created these two worlds in close proximity, Nietzsche explains, is not perplexing to one who knows "that uniquely *German cheerfulness*" which was "exhibited by Luther, Beethoven and Wagner." Such cheerfulness, while perhaps unique to Germans in modern times, has not been limited to the Germans historically. For one who 'knows history,' there is a counterpart to this German cheerfulness: that of the Hellenic Greeks. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche discusses Greek cheerfulness. Based on a tragic view of the world, it is a pessimism that can face the unadorned, ugly truth of existence and still cheerfully embrace life; a pessimism that can peer into depths of existence and confront its terribleness futility, and can still feel the value of existence and joy at becoming. While confronting the truth of reality, Wagner, by means of his tragic art, is able to offer modern man consolation for his suffering and seduce him to life.[14] Nietzsche describes the healing power of Wagner's art: the composer dispenses "the most delicious of draughts to all who have suffered profoundly from life:" "that golden, thoroughly fermented mixture of simplicity, the penetrating glance of love, reflective mind and roguishness." Having thus 'drunk' Wagner's art, one returns to life "as it were with the smile of convalescents" (8/5).

iii. The necessity of the Bayreuth festival

Having come into his own as the dithyrambic dramatist, Wagner focused his energy on the creation of the *Ring*. Resolved that the world as presently constituted was not ready for his art, Wagner gave up his search for kindred souls and created his art only for himself. A solitary soul in the modern world, Wagner found that he alone was concerned with the creation and preservation of his art. However, Nietzsche observes, something happened that changed this situation:

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[14] The consoling powers of tragedy were discussed earlier by Nietzsche in section 7, which is addressed in chapter 5 of this thesis.

> *friends* were coming to tell him of a subterranean movement of many souls—it was far from being the 'folk' that was here in motion and announcing itself, but perhaps the germ and first source of life of a truly human community to be perfected in the distant future....

Cautiously, Wagner hoped that his art, sheltered by loving and faithful hands, would be saved for a deserving time. However, if it was to be "preserve[d]...for that future destined to it as the art-work of the future," the good intentions of his "self-sacrificing but few friends" were not enough (8/5). Unlike a poem or work of philosophy, which is complete when the final words have been put to paper, an opera in the full sense comprises much more than just a musical score and libretto including stage directions. Opera must be performed to bring both the music and the drama to life. Magee emphasises that "only in fully staged performances do the works become themselves."[15] Wagner's art, Nietzsche explains, "would not have been finished, not brought to a conclusion, if he had entrusted it to posterity only as a mute score." To guarantee a future for his art, he had to "found a *stylistic tradition* inscribed, not in signs on paper, but in effects upon the souls of men." He had "publicly to demonstrate and give instruction in what could not be guessed...so as to provide a model" for the performance and representation of his art that "no other could provide" (8/6). This was Wagner's "lofty

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[15] Magee, *Aspects of Wagner*, 87.

duty" to himself, his art, and the world (8/5). Out of love, he was compelled to descend back to the world.[16]

The need to have his art performed posed a challenge. Whereas a writer has control over his final product, Wagner, like all dramatists, could not stage his operas alone.[17] As a composer relies on an orchestra to make his symphony audible to men, Wagner depended on others to imbue his art with life. To name but a few, Wagner relied on production managers, musicians, singers, conductors, set designers, costume designers, light and sound technicians, special effect technicians, machinists, and stage hands. Wagner saw all aspects of performance vital to the whole and thus gave attention to everything. He had to harmonise the efforts of these men, ensuring they worked together to present a unified product in accord with his idea. If this in itself were not a sufficient challenge, producing Wagnerian operas—transforming myth into drama—also posed many technical difficulties. Often the complexity of the dramatic action proved difficult to stage and required elaborate special effects, pushing the boundaries of technical knowledge at the time. Moreover, Wagner's music was difficult to perform, posing a challenge for musicians, singers (who not only had to sing, but also act), and even conductors, all of whom required instruction and coaching from Wagner.[18] While the aforementioned aspects of production proved to be obstacles, they were problems of a practical nature; with the proper supervision and instruction, they could be overcome. In this respect, over time Wagner was successful. He made high demands on those performing his operas, and some artists rose to the occasion, a trend that continued into the future.[19] Today, spectators of Wagner's operas enjoy a level of talent and technical expertise unprecedented in the composer's day.

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[16] This is the "peculiar hybrid" of *anabasis* and *katabasis* in the dramatist discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis.

[17] Later in this essay, Nietzsche compares the artist in this regard to the philosopher:

> For it is, to be sure, a life full of torment and shame, to be a homeless wanderer in a world to which one nonetheless has to speak and of which one has to make demands, which one despises and yet is unable to do without—it is the actual predicament of the artist of the future; he cannot, like the philosopher, hunt after knowledge all by himself in a dark corner, for he needs human souls as mediators with the future, public institutions as guarantees of this future, as bridges between the now and the hereafter. His art is not to be embarked on the ship of the written word, as the philosopher's work can be: art wants *performers* as transmitters, not letters and notes. Across whole stretches of Wagner's life there resounds a fear that he will not meet these performers and that, instead of the practical example he ought to give them, he will be forced to confine himself to indications in writing, and instead of active demonstration present the merest shadow of it to those who read books, which means on the whole those who are not artists. (10/7)

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[18] The difficulty of performing Wagnerian operas (which is still felt today) is illustrated by early attempts to stage *Tristan und Isolde*. Eduard Devrient's attempted to stage it at Karlsruhe with neither a previous performance to model it on, nor the personal guidance of Wagner (who was still living in exile). Gutman retells the story:

> Devrient...had abandoned it as unplayable by his relatively modest company. When Wagner represented the work as highly practical, he had, of course, deceived himself as well as others. He admitted to Mathilde, 'The fruit of *Tristan* is not easily gathered.' It (and also the future *Meistersinger*) at least would not be at the mercy of machinists [which were necessary to produce his earlier operas], an advantage, to be sure. But, upon reading the score again, he wondered whether it did not overstep the limits of musical performance. At times he himself feared the opera to be inexecutable, and it is all the more understandable that at Karlsruhe, without the composer's guidance, one of the more revolutionary musical creations of the century presented insoluble riddles. In Paris, on the other hand, [Wagner] could personally coach his artists. But first the capital [the critics and audience] was to be prepared by concerts presenting selections from his earlier works along with the *Tristan* prelude. (192)

The great Kärntnertor Opera House in Vienna also attempted to stage *Tristan*. This time, Wagner was present to guide rehearsals. However, while he was able to "work miracles with the Vienna orchestra and all the members of his cast," he was unable to with respect to the tenor, Ander, who was to sing the role of Tristan. Gutman relates: "Ander, so glorious a Lohengrin, had become terrified of Tristan's part and was succumbing to a series of strategic indispositions" (204). After several dozen rehearsals, Vienna gave up on performing *Tristan*. Due to the difficulties of performing Wagnerian operas, Wagner envisioned a school for the express purpose of training singers, musicians and composers in his own style and technique.

[19] Nietzsche explains the process by which Wagner incited performers to improvement later in his essay:

> The extraordinary tasks Wagner has set his actors and singers will for generations to come incite them to competition with one another, so as at last to achieve a perfect visible and palpable representation of the image of the Wagnerian hero which already lies perfectly realized in the music of the drama. (9/5)

More deeply problematic for Wagner was that his operas were absorbed into the established theatrical institutions (a problem that, Nietzsche would argue, remains today). The theatre of Wagner's day usurped his attempts to create a truly revolutionary art and create a theatre very different from the status quo. Wagner's art was noticeably different in both style and purpose from the other operas of his day. This is illustrated in part by contrasting Wagner's "music drama" with traditional drama and opera:

> Traditional drama depicts, for the most part, what goes on outside people, in particular what goes on *between* them…Music drama would be the opposite of this in almost every respect. It would be about the insides of characters…Music drama would also be the reverse of traditional opera, for in traditional opera the drama was merely a framework on which to hang the music—drama was the means, music the end—whereas the object of music drama was the presentation of archetypal situations *as experienced by the participants*, and to this dramatic end music was a means, albeit a uniquely expressive one.[20]

Contrary to Wagner's vision of his 'artwork for the future,' theatre houses, production managers, conductors, and singers forced Wagnerian operas to conform to contemporary expectations. Wagner tried to remedy these perversions of his art, but the situation was beyond his control. The theatrical world of modern Europe, misunderstanding Wagner's aim and intent, failed to grasp the novel style of execution, and consequently did not perform his operas as he envisioned:

> everywhere, even on the part of the performers and producers, his art was taken to be precisely the same kind of thing as any other music for the stage and subjected to the rules of the repulsive recipe-book of ordinary opera production; indeed, the cultivated conductors cut and hacked at his works until they really were operas which, now they had had the soul taken out of them, the singers felt capable of encompassing….

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[20] Magee, Aspects of Wagner, 7-9.

Wagner made his own "attempts to indicate by deed and example…correctness and completeness in the performance of his works;" however, his efforts fell on deaf or incompetent ears. Either his directions were brushed aside and ignored altogether, or they were followed with a "sort of ineptitude and prudish anxiety." Nietzsche describes the result, citing one particular example: "the nocturnal riot in the streets of Nuremburg prescribed for the second act of the *Meistersinger* [would be represented] with a troop of posturing ballet dancers" (8/6).

More than just the style of execution, the very *raison d'être* of Wagner's art was corrupted by modernity. He envisioned an entirely new theatre with a radically different relationship to the people: unlike opera and theatre of the present—which Wagner characterised as frivolous entertainment for the bourgeoisie—Wagner sought to communicate the deepest things in human life through his art, creating a communal experience in which men joined together in celebration of life.[21] However, while created for a higher purpose, his art, along with all other arts of modernity, was fed "indiscriminately into the gaping maw of insatiable boredom and thirst for distraction" (8/6). This was inevitable as long as Wagner's art was reliant upon the established theatrical institution.

Nietzsche sympathetically observes that Wagner's struggle to realise his vision was seemingly futile. No matter what he attempted, Wagner was continually confronted with the decadent forces of modernity:

> It almost seemed as though a people in many respects serious and ponderous was refusing to be deprived of a systematic levity in regard to its most serious artist, as though this were why

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[21] Ibid., 5-7.

> everything vulgar, thoughtless, inept and malicious in the German character had to be discharged at him (8/6).

For these reasons and more, Wagner became repulsed by the treatment of his art at the hands of his contemporaries. A less discerning public, however, loved Wagnerian operas in the form in which they received them. Even Wagner's friends, Nietzsche relates, intoxicated with his success, lost sight of the higher purpose of Wagner's art. Nietzsche's Wagner, however, was embarrassed by this; it was precisely in his success that "his uniquely lofty idea was denied and derided." Despite this new popular success, Wagner stayed loyal to himself, and did not lose sight of his higher aim, even though he doubted if it would ever be realised.[22]

In the midst of his despair, an event occurred that not only reminded Wagner of his 'lofty duty,' but that also gave him hope that, despite the fate of his other works, it would be possible to "rescue...his greatest work from the success born of misunderstanding and the abuse to which his other works had been subjected" (8/6).[23] The Franco-Prussian war, identified as a "great German war" by Nietzsche, made

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[22] Nietzsche's claim that Wagner renounced all power and was not tempted by success is an instance of how Nietzsche turned his misgivings and doubts about Wagner into strengths that he could praise in this essay. As argued by Kaufmann in *Nietzsche*:

> When Nietzsche wrote this *Meditation* he had severe misgivings; and when *Human, All-Too-Human* appeared he was firmly convinced that Wagner had been thoroughly corrupted by his belated 'success' and 'power' and that, to maintain and increase them, he had made his peace with State and Church and bowed to public opinion (180).

Wagner's behaviour at the festival, as well as *Parsifal*, confirmed for Nietzsche this corruption. The beautified Wagner that appears in *Wagner in Bayreuth*, however, does not share the historical Wagner's weakness, and thus is portrayed as Nietzsche wished him to be: able to overcome the temptations of worldly power.

[23] There is a small error in the Hollingdale translation of *Wagner in Bayreuth* in this sentence. I have corrected it, changing "words" to "works."

Wagner look up (8/5).[24] These Germans—"those same Germans whom [Wagner] knew to have degenerated and fallen so far from the German highmindedness" exemplified by himself and other great Germans of history—now appeared transformed. They "exhibited two genuine virtues, simple bravery and presence of mind" (8/5). While still not the folk he had been searching for, Wagner saw in these Germans "enhanced feeling of duty," which optimistically led him to believe it was possible that there may be souls worthy of entrusting with his "most precious possession." The time was now right for Wagner to bring his work to fruition; to "present [the *Ring*] at its own unique tempo as an example for all further time." Wagner had long felt the necessity of this task, but had lacked a worthy audience. Now, however, "he believed he saw an enhanced feeling of duty also awaken" in others (8/6). From this mutual feeling of duty on behalf of both artist and spectator grew the great event at Bayreuth. This mutuality was crucial. Wagner could not realise his goal on his own—he required a great spectator to appreciate and understand this event, to be properly affected by it, and to translate it into something meaningful in order to guarantee its effect for posterity.[25]

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[24] Nietzsche's characterization of this war here as "great" is a bit puzzling, given his criticisms of the Germans with respect to the war, as discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis. Moreover, earlier in the essay he questioned with respect to his fellow men "whether mind was present at all" (6/1). To understand his characterization, it is necessary to bear in mind that Nietzsche is creating an idealised portrait not only of Wagner, but also of the spectators at Bayreuth, and the German people as a whole, in order to communicate the great idea of Bayreuth.

The significance of the war that Nietzsche attributes to Wagner's conception of the Bayreuth festival begs comparison to Nietzsche himself. While Wagner was struck by the idea of Bayreuth during the Franco-Prussian War, Nietzsche was embarking on his own endeavours. Looking back on *The Birth of Tragedy* in his 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism,' Nietzsche testifies that his first book was born during the Franco-Prussian War; yet, Nietzsche does not call the war "great." Moreover, while Nietzsche closely links Wagner's idea for the festival to the war, with respect to his book, Nietzsche characterises the war as a coinciding event rather than a deciding factor in its creation:

> As the thunder of the battle of Worth was rolling over Europe, the muser and riddle-friend who was to be the father of this book sat somewhere in an Alpine nook, very bemused and beriddled, hence very concerned and yet unconcerned, and wrote down his thoughts about the *Greeks*—the core of the strange and almost inaccessible book to which this belated preface (or postscript) shall now be added. A few weeks later—and he himself was to be found under the walls of Metz, still wedded to the question marks that he had placed after the alleged 'cheerfulness' of the Greeks and of Greek art. Eventually, in that month of profoundest suspense when the peace treaty was being debated at Versailles, he, too, attained peace within himself and, slowly convalescing from an illness contracted at the front, completed the final draft of *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*.

Nietzsche, 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism,' *The Birth of Tragedy*, 1.

Yet, while acting *in* the present, Wagner was not acting *for* the present. He had found a small group of deserving contemporary spectators whom he could impact, and thus men with whom he could entrust his art. They were not, however, the men for whom his art was ultimately intended. Wagner was creating his art for men who had yet to be born—men of the future. Nietzsche argues that the festival at Bayreuth, while occurring in the present, was created for a future time:

> [it] lies like strange sunlight upon recent and immediately coming years; designed for the benefit of a distant future, a future that is merely possible but not demonstrable, a future that is to the present and to men knowing only the present not much more than an enigma or an abomination, to those few permitted to assist in its creation a foretaste and fore-experience of the highest kind through which they know themselves blessed, blessing and fruitful beyond their span of time… (8/6).

As such, the festival can be characterised as an 'untimely' event—created by a man who was not of his time for the benefit of a time to come. While Nietzsche doubted the greatness of the actual festival, he recognised the necessity of performing the *Ring* and the 'untimely' importance of the idea behind the festival—the creation of a new, tragic art and its attack on the bogus culture of modernity. Only once having been brought into the world could Wagner's art and the idea of the festival be preserved for a future time. Despite the shortcomings of the historical Wagner and Bayreuth, this event remains a significant achievement and gave reason for hope: a "gleam of light" in an otherwise dark world (6/4). As Nietzsche argues in his third *Untimely Meditation*, the example of Schopenhauer demonstrates that philosophy is still possible in the modern age; likewise, the example of Wagner demonstrates that true art is still possible. Recognizing its importance for modernity, Nietzsche employed his powerful pen to support the festival publicly, protecting the idea in his essay.

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[25] The relationship between deed and receptivity is discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis.

Having concluded his account of Wagner's evolution, Nietzsche closes section 8 with sober reflections on Wagner's life. His tone is solemn as he confides his thoughts and feelings regarding the artist: "one hardly needs to say that the breath of the tragic lies over this life" (8/7). This is in accord with Nietzsche's earlier principle that led him to assert that the "life of the epic poet will have something of the epic about it...and the life of the dramatist will take a dramatic course" (2/1). The tragic is found in Wagner's struggles, victories, and failures, which is communicated by Wagner through his artwork, and by Nietzsche through his essay. For those who have a sense for the tragic, this sense is reinforced by the story of Wagner's life:

> everyone who can sense something of it from out of his own soul, everyone to whom the constraint of a tragic deception as to the goal of life, the bending and breaking of intentions, renunciation and purification through love are things not wholly unknown, must feel in that which Wagner now exhibits as an art-work a dreamlike recollection of the great man's own heroic existence. From some far distance we shall believe we hear Siegfried telling of his deeds....

While the story told by Nietzsche is tragic, he insinuates that Wagner's actual life was all the more so; the reason lies in the discrepancy between Nietzsche's portrait of a beautified Wagner and that of the historical Wagner. The philosopher has realised that Wagner, who once set out with good intentions on a high path, become corrupted by his fame and success. Having fallen, Wagner lost sight of his original aim and sacrificed the idea of Bayreuth on modern altars. The hopes that Nietzsche had held out for the festival, the ideal that he had believed in, was not actualised. Wagner proved not to be the cultural saviour that Nietzsche was awaiting, thus the cultural apocalypse would have to wait for a future time. Out of loyalty to himself, Nietzsche must now go his own way—out of love, he must renounce Wagner and purify himself. Thus, while there is a touch of happiness in recollecting Wagner's life, "there is weaved [into this happiness] the profound sadness of late summer"—the end has come for both a great friendship and great hopes. The optimism of morning symbolised by the festival at Bayreuth is now a distant memory, "all nature lies still in a yellow evening of light" (8/7).

CONCLUSION

Having reached the end of the first part of ***Wagner in Bayreuth***, one must return to the beginning of the essay, reflecting on section 1 in light of what follows. Nietzsche begins the fourth *Untimely Meditation* in anticipation of a potentially great event: the first festival at Bayreuth. In his essay, Nietzsche overtly celebrates the festival; alongside his praise, however, he quietly expresses doubts. Nietzsche's powerful rhetoric is crafted to persuade a hasty reader that the festival will be great. He argues that the necessary factors have come together, ensuring the crucial correspondence between deed and receptivity, while at the same time hinting to a ruminative reader that he is skeptical of Wagner's grasp of necessity and sense of timing, hence of the greatness of his deed itself. As the idea of Bayreuth is developed throughout this essay, so too is the evolution of Wagner. Nietzsche paints a portrait of the highest artist—a beautified Wagner. Simultaneously, however, serious doubts are raised with respect to the historical man. To conclude this thesis, it is necessary to reconsider Nietzsche's doubt and attempt to reconcile it with his outward commendation of the festival. An understanding of this issue sheds light on Nietzsche's aim in *Wagner in Bayreuth*.

When Nietzsche wrote and published his essay, the festival had yet to take place; the festival that Nietzsche praises is an idealised form of the festival, at that point in time only existing in thought. Nietzsche regarded the actual staging of the festival as a significant event in modernity—one worthy of public support. If the public were persuaded against Wagner and his art, the impact of the festival would have been irretrievably lost. Nietzsche, a well-known intimate of Wagner's, did not want his nuanced, even delicate criticisms to be confused with a heavy-handed rejection of Wagner (as he later published), thus adding to the existent Wagnerian criticism and further biasing the public again the composer. Therefore, Nietzsche's style of presentation of *Wagner in Bayreuth* is politically salutary. Nietzsche also had a philosophical reason for his style of presentation, which bears on all readers of his essay. In order to give serious consideration to Wagner's attempted great deed, Nietzsche must momentarily set aside his doubts. The festival at Bayreuth must be assumed to be a great event. If one does not grant Nietzsche this provisional courtesy, one is sure to miss the necessity of this festival and the significance of Nietzsche's essay. Having concluded this consideration of part one of *Wagner in Bayreuth*, one can now reflect on what has transpired and evaluate the significance of the idea of the Bayreuth festival.

Throughout this essay, Nietzsche stresses the importance of the festival at Bayreuth, arguing for its timely 'untimeliness' in the modern age. Decay in modern culture and the ensuing spiritual crisis necessitates this festival. The philosopher, from a perspective outside of time, looks down on the modern age; his discerning eye considers the situation of modern man in light of man's universal needs created by "the unalterable character and bone-structure of human nature" as seen in the particular circumstances of modernity (11/1). Looking to a higher conception of art and culture, Nietzsche evaluates that of the present day.

Identifying the type of art we moderns need, one must first understand the true role of art within the human community. Art is a permanent and necessary fixture in human life—as animal man cannot live without sleep, so his distinctly human side cannot live without art. To understand the role of art in human life, one must understand its close connection to philosophy. As discussed in chapter 4 of this thesis, mankind naturally lives in the realm of interpretation: through thought, man creates his lived-in world. The philosopher provides a coherent interpretation of the experiential world, thereby establishing man's horizons and imbuing existence with meaning. Translating this interpretation into terms accessible to the unphilosophic is the task of the artist. Art is the stamp which ensures the philosopher's interpretation impacts the daily lives of men. In a wholesome environment bounded by the alliance between art and philosophy, man is able to develop his potential, flourishing as he matures to perfection.

Not only does art provide the means by which we come to understand existence, it further serves life by providing man repose from the struggles of life. Suffering and injustice are inherent to the human condition. As Nietzsche discusses in the essay, man's self-consciousness, his nature as a seeker of knowledge, and his very individuation contribute to this suffering. Our incapacity to be simply happy, moral and wise puts us in need of art; without art, life is irredeemable. While true art provides man solace, thereby justifying existence, it is far from being a means to escape the world, as it has been misused in modernity. True art confronts reality, no matter how terrible, while helping man make sense of his struggles. Consequently, art enables man to live in the tension of spirit created by the opposition between his knowledge of the world and his spiritual-moral capacities; art exists "*so that the bow shall not break*" (4/3). Thus serving man, art genuinely refreshes and recreates man.

Demoted from its lofty life-serving role, the art of modernity has been relegated to vulgar entertainment and superficial—albeit pleasing—appearances. Enslaved to the debased demands of modern society, art no longer serve man's spiritual needs. Rather than making sense of life and helping man live in his tension of spirit, the art of modernity distracts and stupefies. Silencing man's consciousness, thereby allowing him to escape from the world and himself, the art of modernity reinforces modern man's 'false feeling.' In the present-day world, art "exists merely so that [men] shall feel even more unwell, even gloomier and more senseless, or even more harried and greedy" (5/6). Art and man have entered into a mutually debasing relationship. Modern man has enslaved art to meet his "imagined needs;" in turn, modern art cultivates an aggregate of ignoble men whose decadent so-called culture reinforces the degradation of art (8/2).

Man's need for a *true* art—art that is free of the perversion and falseness permeating the contemporary world, and that is able to satisfy man's highest spiritual needs—is made more pressing in light of the crisis of heretofore regnant interpretations of the world. Looking to modern man's family history, Nietzsche argues that the last great event was the two-fold task of Alexander the Great. Alexander facilitated the Hellenization of the world, which required the Orientalisation of the Hellenic. This deed facilitated the spread of Hellenic philosophy, particularly the dominant Platonism, which then mixed with Orientalism. In the union of these two forces, the path was paved for the development of Christianity. Alexander's task is the last great event because it began the process that firmly bound the world within the horizons of Christianised Platonism. Although this interpretation of the world ruled for two millennia, it did not do so unchallenged. Modern science, itself the spawn of Platonism, proved the greatest opponent to Christianised Platonism. Seeking truth and intelligibility, science, having won battle after battle in this spiritual war, obliterated the horizons of Christianised Platonism. Initially, modern science offered man an earthly redemption in place of the

Christian heavenly redemption: by conquering nature and 'correcting it,' science would create an earthly utopia and redeem existence. However, in its endless pursuit of truth, science uncovered its own illusion, exposing horrifying truths along with its own limited ability to cope with those truths. Modern man has been left with the prospect of an unbounded existence: "the pendulum of history has swung back to the point from which it started its swing into enigmatic distant and lost horizons" (4/1). Now, without the comforts of the religion that science undermined, modern science again forces man to confront the dark abyss that opens before him upon acknowledging the absurdity of existence. Unable to endure reality without solace, man needs the redemption that only art can provide. .Looking to a new art—an art for men of the future—Nietzsche reflects back in time to a strong and healthy people: the Hellenic Greeks. Despite the great distance between modern man and our ancient relatives, Nietzsche argues, we are close to them in spirit.

Like Greece in the age of Aeschylus, modern man is aware of Silenic wisdom: that life is meaningless, and that suffering and injustice are inherent to the human condition. In response to their tragic insight, the Greeks created a 'tragic art' that offered a cure to the nauseating effects of Silenic wisdom. Through the beautiful portrayal of the hero's struggle with the world, tragic drama imparts significance to suffering and consecrates man to something higher. Thus, it lends a sense of the eternal and suprahistorical to our transitory existence, and affirms that irrepressible life is at the bottom of all things. Art in the 'tragic age of the Greeks' enabled men to live with vigour and courage in spite of their pessimistic knowledge.

The great culture of the Hellenes, bounded by tragic horizons, was unravelled by the deed of Alexander. Symbolised by the cutting of the Gordian knot, Alexander opened Greek borders, allowing what was foreign to overwhelm Greek culture, thereby destroying the coherent, unified whole. Hellenic culture, its constituting threads dispersed, was reduced to a fragile web cast over the world. However, unlike Platonised Christianity, the Hellenic was not obliterated; it still haunts the world like a pale ghost. Reflected in this image, modern man sees a familiar face: "the earth, which has now been sufficiently orientalised, longs again for the Hellenic" (4/1). Nietzsche does not endorse a return to the Greeks *per se*, but (rather) a resurrection of their tragic view of the world. The 'death' of the Christian God and the ensuing collapse of the interpretation of the world espoused by Christianised Platonism necessitates a new interpretation of the world. Not just any interpretation, however, will suffice. It must be one that harmonises with our knowledge of reality as revealed by modern science. Unable to alter our permanent reality, Nietzsche recognises the need to change our posture towards the world and existence. What we moderns need is a culture shaped by a tragic interpretation of the world. The reestablishment of tragic horizons will be the deed that overcomes that of Alexander, and hence the next great event. In *Wagner in Bayreuth*, Nietzsche looks to art and its role in stamping such an interpretation on modern man.

In light of Nietzsche's synoptic view of modern culture and the world, the reader can reflect on the significance of the festival at Bayreuth. While ostensibly a showcase for Wagner's art, the festival came to symbolise much more. At Bayreuth, unified through Wagner's art and dedicated to a higher task, men come together to form a true human community. Within this community, art—rescued from its degradation in the hands of modern men—is returned to its rightful place. Significantly, Wagner's new form of music-drama once again gives voice to the wisdom of Silenus and makes manifest the sufferings of Dionysus. The sense for the tragic is consequently reborn into the world. Having journeyed the high path of the tragic hero and shared in his struggles, the spectators are consecrated to something higher than themselves. Their sense of justice provoked, these men are roused out of their former slumber and stirred to action, literally encouraged to fight. By means of the example it sets and the men it transforms, the festival at Bayreuth challenges bogus culture and decadent art in modernity. Bayreuth is not the battle itself, but "the morning consecration on the day of battle" (4/3). As Nietzsche later reflects, it is "that great noon at which the most elect consecrate themselves for the greatest of all tasks:" the creation of a new culture.[1]

Having retraced Nietzsche's argument and given consideration to the significance of Bayreuth and its potential greatness, one must now return to the doubt Nietzsche expressed at the beginning of the essay: is the festival at Bayreuth a great event? Nietzsche does not out rightly answer this question. Instead, he seasons the text with doubts, suggesting that the festival is not for this time. Nietzsche's scepticism is of a practical nature—he does not doubt the worthiness of the idea of Bayreuth, only the actual staging of it. Subtly questioning Wagner's character, Nietzsche is reserved with respect to Wagner's motivations. Nietzsche also questions the nature of the spectators, insinuating that they are not the worthy recipients of Wagner's deed as Nietzsche has idealised it. Without the necessary ingredients—a great man and great spectators—Wagner's deed does not makes the required impression on the modern age; the great event that Nietzsche expressly hopes for at the beginning of section 1 is not realised. As he later remarks with respect to the festival, it is "[t]he vision of a feast that I shall yet live to see."[2] This does not detract from the significance of Wagner's deed in and of itself; the idea of the festival—what it was intended to be—remains an important model of what culture should be and points to an art that serves life. Nietzsche preserves this idea in his essay, so that like an arrow shooting off into the distance, it may strike more fertile soil in a future time. Thus he ensures that Wagner's deed will not be blown away by the winds of time. With the inauguration of Bayreuth, Wagner's task may be considered complete. The task for the philosopher, however, is far from over. Viewed from our perspective—over a century into these two men's future time—one can retrospectively recognise that Nietzsche, saying goodbye to his old friend, took up the task he attributed to his idealised Wagner—a rebirth of tragic insight, leading to the creation of a new culture—and soldiered forth alone.[3] With sober reflections of the past, he looks to the future: the philosopher must create a new interpretation of the world and establish new horizons.

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[1] Nietzsche, 'Why I Write Such Good Books: 'The Birth of Tragedy,'' *EH*, 4.

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[2] Ibid.

[3] In the book that followed his last 'untimely one,' *Human-all-too-Human*, Nietzsche more expressly bade farewell to Wagner, whom he resigned to the "Sunset of Art." This sunset, Nietzsche argued, would be followed by "a sunrise of philosophy whose aim must be to reevaluate all values." Fischer-Dieskau, 164-65.

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